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LOGGER LEM; Or, Life and Peril in the Pine Woods.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,

AUTHOR OF "MISSISSIPPI MOSE," "BUCK FARLEY," "BILL, THE BLIZZARD," ETC., ETC., ETC.



ON HIS BACK THE SQUATTY FIGURE OF LUKE, WHO WAS TWISTING THE TAIL AND YELLING AS IF HIS LIFE DEPENDED ON HIS EXERTIONS.
LOGGER LEM HAD TO LAUGH.

Logger Lem;

OR,

Life and Peril in the Pine Woods.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,
AUTHOR OF "FLUSH FRED," "MONTANA NAT,"
"BILL, THE BLIZZARD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD SORE.

"No, Lem; I see no occasion for going into that matter and tearing open an old sore. There is no reason why we should bring it up now."

"Pardon me, father; but there is a reason—a good and sufficient reason. I have learned enough to make me deeply interested in that story. Having learned so much it is necessary that I should know more. If you are not willing to tell it to me, I must get it in some other way."

There were two of them, an old and a young man—John Crawford and his adopted son Lemuel.

John Crawford, though getting on in years, was not as old a man as he seemed to be. He was a prosperous man in business, owning a large iron foundry in New York, and people said that the world went well with him; but a severe personal calamity had aged him prematurely, and had left its scars upon him.

Lemuel Crawford, generally known as "Lem," had but lately passed his twenty-first year, and was a tall and handsome young man, bright, athletic, wide awake, and well supplied with nerve and will power.

On this occasion his will power was exerted for the purpose of learning the nature of the severe personal calamity which has been alluded to, and as was usually the case, his effort was successful.

The old gentleman frowned as he considered the matter, but soon surrendered.

"I had hoped," said he, "that you would be spared that. I wanted you to grow up as free from trouble as you reasonably might be, and would have been quite unwilling to shoulder off upon you any portion of a sorrowful past. Who told you what you say you have learned?"

"An old friend of yours—Mr. Harwich."

"Harwich might have been in better business than worrying you with that trouble. But as you have got hold of a part of it, you must have it all."

"I will tell you the whole sad story, Lem, as plainly and briefly as I can, as I don't want to make any more words about it than are absolutely necessary."

"When I married my wife, Alice Reed, I knew that there was a former suitor of hers who was badly upset by the marriage.

"His name was Charles Carinford, and he believed that he had a prior claim upon Alice. She declared that he had no such claim, as she had never given him any promise or any special encouragement; but I do not doubt that his belief was genuine, as he was wrong-headed in more ways than one."

"I had reason to know of this grudge on the part of Carinford, as I received a letter from him on our wedding day, charging Alice with duplicity, and declaring his intention of being revenged upon both of us."

"He was not unmanly in this, as he openly signed his name to the letter."

"My wife and I so loved each other that our honeymoon was a long one. It might have lasted to this day if she had lived."

"We had settled down in a house of our own, and Maud, our one child, was fourteen months old, and still it was honeymoon with us."

"I was prospering in my business, and we had servants and everything that we could reasonably desire."

"One afternoon Nora, our nursemaid, took little Maud out in her baby-carriage, and went toward the North river, through a new street, and into a district where there were then but few houses."

"They had just passed one of the ridges of rock that were then plentiful about there, when a man suddenly overtook or encountered them."

"I suppose he had watched them when they left my house, and had gone around a block or two to intercept them."

"As soon as he came up to them, he snatched the baby from its carriage, without a word, and ran away."

"Nora was so frightened and flurried that she could do nothing but scream."

"She was so long away that my wife and I became uneasy, and I was about to set out in search of her, when she was brought to the house by two policemen, in a state of violent hysterics."

"Of course we were crazy to know what had become of Maud, but were obliged to wait until the girl was quieted down, when she told the story."

"From the description she gave of the man,

we easily recognized him as Charles Carinford, and knew that he had fulfilled his threat."

"I set the police on his track, employed private detectives, offered large rewards, and did everything I could do to recover my child; but all efforts were unavailing."

"From that day to this I have never seen or heard of Charles Carinford or my little one, nor have I had the faintest clew that could point to the existence of either of them."

"The loss of the child was a death-blow to my wife, and she survived it but a short time."

"Then I was a childless widower, Lem, until you came to me, and in you I have found great comfort."

"I am glad to hear you say that, father, and I hope I may never be anything but a comfort to you. Will you please go a little further, now, and tell me how I came to you?"

"I had gone to a police station, on the same business of which I have been speaking, and I found you there. You were a waif, a stray, lost in the streets, and picked up by a policeman. They had been unable to find out who you belonged to, and were going to send you to some Home or Asylum. You were a nice little fellow, and your bright face pleased me. I took you home and adopted you as my son. I believed that you would be a comfort to me, and you have been. I am going to put you into my business soon, so that you will be fully able to succeed me. I hope, Lem, that you will continue to be a comfort to me."

"I hope so, father," answered the young man, a little nervously. "I want to be more than ever a comfort to you, and it is for that very reason that I am afraid that I am going to worry you a little just now."

The old gentleman bowed his head, and clasped his hands, and was silent for a few minutes before he raised his eyes and looked Lem in the face again.

Then he spoke a little fretfully, as old men sometimes will when the world does not move exactly to suit them.

"That's it! I am not blind. I saw what you were leading up to, as soon as you struck that old trouble. Yes, you are going to worry me, and I must have it out with you. What is it, now, Lem, fairly and honestly?"

The young man spoke with a little hesitation, but quite firmly.

"I want to go up into Maine, father—to pass the winter there—in a logging camp."

"Why?"

"You know that my lungs are not as strong as they ought to be, and I need to build up a muscle, and a winter of hard work will do me a vast deal of good."

The old gentleman was looking at him sharply, and Lem did not meet the look as fairly as he might have done.

"That won't do, my boy," said Mr. Crawford. "You know that I want the truth, and that is the thing I always expect from you. What are you holding back?"

"Father!" exclaimed Lem, in a sort of desperation, "can't you allow me to have a bit of a secret?"

"No—not now—not in this. We know each other so well that you could not keep a secret from me. You may as well bring it out and speak plainly."

"Well, sir, I have heard that the man you spoke of—Charles Carinford—the man who stole Maud, is up there in the lumber region."

"That is it, then. I thought so. And you want to go and hunt him."

"Did I say that, sir?"

"No; but you mean it. Suppose you should take his life, would that do me any good? Suppose you should lose your own, would that be a pleasure to me?"

"Suppose something else, father. Suppose that he is alive, and can be found. Is it not reasonable also to suppose that Maud is alive, and can be found?"

John Crawford started up.

Then he sat down again.

His face had suddenly become red, and then it turned pale again.

"You are too much for me, Lem," he said. "You have always had your own way, and of course you will have it now. There is only one thing I beg of you, my boy, and that is that you will bring yourself safe back to me."

"I will try to, father."

CHAPTER II.

AN "INDIAN DEVIL."

THERE were three of them, all working their way through the woods, over and under the snows of winter, toward a logging camp on the upper region of the Penobscot.

One was a tall and active young man, and there could be no doubt of his youth, as the only sign of beard on his face was a slight mustache.

His apparent size was considerably increased by his heavy winter attire.

Thick and baggy trowsers covered his lower extremities, with the addition of woolen leggings and long boots, over which were drawn the cords that fastened his snow-shoes to his feet.

It was evident that he was not accustomed to

snow-shoes, as he managed them awkwardly and his progress over the crusted snow was slower than it should have been.

The upper portions of his body were clothed outwardly in a coarse pea-jacket, belted at the waist, and on the left side, swung by a belt from the right shoulder, was a lumberman's knapsack of stout canvas, with cords that permitted it to be carried by the hand if occasion should require.

His head was covered by a fur cap that left only his face visible, and one of his gloved hands carried a rifle.

This young man was Lem Crawford, who has been introduced to the reader, and who had been dropped by a provision sled on the Penobscot at the mouth of the Accumtink, with such directions as should easily enable him to find his way to Seth Sloman's logging-camp.

It was to be supposed that he would have no difficulty in finding his way there, as the camp was only eight miles from the river, and it was easy to keep the course, even without a compass, and the day was clear and bright.

But there was something about there that might make the journey a difficult one, or even bring it to an untimely end.

There was something in the way, and the question was, what was it, and where was it?

As Lem Crawford examined its tracks in the snow, he overhauled his rifle, to make sure that the weapon was in good working order.

There was good cause for his anxiety, as well as for his curiosity.

The tracks were evidently those of an immense wild beast, so heavy that it sunk in the crusted snow which would easily have borne a man without snow-shoes.

Big tracks they were, too, as large as the crown of a hat, and as round; but Lem Crawford was woodsman enough to judge that they were not bear tracks.

A long-legged beast, no doubt, judging by the distance between the tracks, and by the fact that it had scarcely touched the snow as it stepped across the large trunk of a fallen tree.

A big, fierce, and dangerous animal, of course, and one that was to be avoided, if possible.

But where was it? and how should it be avoided?

There it was, right before him!

Though he had been looking for it, and expecting to see it, he was startled when it stepped out from behind a clump of snow-covered bushes and stood facing him.

It was a magnificent beast to look at, in spite of its too evident ferocity and viciousness.

In size it must have been four feet high and six feet in length, with heavy and thick-set head and shoulders, and the general appearance of an overgrown wildcat.

Its fur was mouse-color, or nearly so, shading down to a much lighter tinge underneath, and its long tail, like that of a cat, curled upward from the snow, and was waved after the manner of the feline race when anger moves them.

The young man was sure that it was contemplating an attack, and what would be the best thing to do?

Should he fly, or fight?

He was not at all inclined to run away, and he had confidence in his rifle.

To be sure, he need not expect to have more than one shot; but he believed in his ability to put that one bullet just where it would do the most good, and that ought to settle the affair.

If it should not settle it, his snow-shoes ought to carry him out of danger.

The beast advanced toward him slowly, rather than cautiously, and crouched for a spring.

As it rose, the young man fired.

The bullet struck just where he wished it to strike, and blood stained the snow; but the beast was neither stopped nor hindered.

Its leap, which looked like a flight rather than a jump, must have been fully twenty feet in length.

No sooner did it strike than it gathered itself together for another leap, and Lem Crawford, astounded by what he had seen thus far, seemed to be incapable of either flying or fighting.

Another leap would bring it upon him, and yet he stood there, stupid and helpless, as if the fiery eyes of the monster had fascinated him and chained him to the spot.

Just then the report of another rifle startled the echoes of the forest, and another bullet pierced the mouse-colored hide of the crouching creature.

This shot was fired by a person whom nobody would have expected to see at that place and time.

It was a girl.

A young girl—surely not more than nineteen, but a little taller than most girls of that age, with curling light hair, a fresh complexion and the brightest of blue eyes.

Her visible garments were a heavy fur pelisse, below which stout leggings showed, and a fur cap that was partly a hood.

This cap left nothing to be seen but a straggling lock of hair and the oval of her face; but

in the face were those splendid blue eyes and rosy cheeks and a perfect mouth.

When Lem Crawford fired, this girl had come skimming over the crust on her snow-shoes as lightly and easily as a bird flies.

It may have been that this apparition was largely responsible for the youth's condition of staring helplessness.

As soon as she was near enough she wheeled, and halted and fired, her bullet striking the beast fairly just behind the right shoulder.

But it was a hard beast to kill.

Like all the members of the feline race, it had a large allowance of lives.

As soon as it felt the sting of another wound, it turned and dashed at the last aggressor.

For her part, realizing the fact that she had no chance to charge her rifle again, she attempted to fly, with the purpose of putting a tree between herself and her pursuer.

Then Lem Crawford discovered that snow-shoes were not sufficient to enable a person to escape from that dangerous brute.

Though it sunk into the snow at every jump, leaving a trail that was plainly marked by its own blood, and though she skinned over the surface as lightly as a bird, its leaps were so long and so rapidly made that it easily overhauled her.

The young man, aroused to the necessity of doing something, no longer stared and hesitated.

Hastily drawing a revolver, he pressed forward as rapidly as he could to the rescue of the girl.

She had found the tree she wanted, and was endeavoring to dodge the infuriated beast around it, when Lem came up and began to pour his revolver-bullets into that mouse-colored skin.

This drew its attention from the girl, and it turned again upon its first foe, quite as fierce as ever, and apparently as fresh and strong.

Then it was that the third of the three persons who have been mentioned came upon the scene to play his part.

This was a tall and strongly-built man, whose weather-beaten face and grizzled beard told of advancing years, though there was surely no evidence of any loss of vigor in his bearing and his action.

He was attired much as Lem Crawford was, except that in place of a pea-jacket he wore a heavy woolen shirt or blouse, well supplied with pockets.

Doubtless attracted by the firing, he came sailing into the scene on his snow-shoes, ranged up within a few paces of the beast, and sent a rifle bullet into it just as it was about to spring upon Crawford, who had exhausted all the charges of his revolver.

It was, indeed, a hard beast to kill.

With three rifle-bullets in its body, and perhaps half a dozen revolver-bullets, it was still strong and vicious enough to hurl itself upon the young man and throw him down.

Instantly the tall man was there, too, with a long and sharp hunting-knife, feeling for the heart of the creature, and he found it.

This last attack was too much for the endurance of the big and savage beast.

Gnashing its teeth and growling, it yielded to fate, rolled over, and died.

The tall man pulled it away from Crawford, who presented a rather sorry appearance when he rose to his feet.

His clothes were stained not only by the blood of the beast but by his own blood, as teeth and claws had been able to do some damage before the end came.

"You got here in time, my friend," said the young man, as he held out his hand.

"Yaas—rayther lucky fur you, I guess."

The girl had come out from behind her tree, and the tall man turned to greet her.

"Hello, May Hawksley! Looks like you're fur from camp. Did you have a hand in this skirmish?"

"I bad a bullet in it," she answered.

"Jest like you. But I advise you, miss, to leave this kind o' cattle alone hereafter."

"What is it, Hank? Is it what they call a—"

"Yaas, little 'un. That's jest what it is. It's what we call an Injun devil, and the name fits it right well. All-fired hard to kill, as you've seen, and the savagest thing that runs the woods—leastwise in these parts. The Injuns call it Lunk Soos, and it's the only four-footed crittur they're feared of. 'Heap debbil all through' is what they say when they speak of it, and you may bet your sweet life that they give it a wide berth. That's what a white man had better do too, unless he is mighty well fixed. But it's seldom we come across one of 'em nowadays, I'm glad to say."

"For my part, I don't care to come across another," remarked Crawford.

"You're right, there. I say, youngster, who are you, anyhow, and where bound?"

"My name is Lem Crawford, and I am bound for Seth Sloman's logging-camp."

"That's where I belong. I've heard of you, and am glad to meet you. My name is Hank Ward. Folks mostly call me Hemlock Hank, mebbe because I'm so tough—he, Miss Hawksley?"

"Tough and true, Hank," responded the girl.

"Thank ye, miss. Now, young man, let me take a squint at your bide an' taller."

Hank Ward examined Crawford's shoulder and leg, where the teeth and claws of the "Indian devil" had left their marks.

"Wuss hurt than I thought," he said. "I guess you hadn't better go on to Sloman's jest yet. Walter Hawksley's camp is nigh here—much nigher than oun—and that's what you'd best strike out for. Miss May will take you in. As for me, I must stop and git the pelt of this critter."

CHAPTER III.

THE HAWKSLEY CAMP.

NOTHING could have suited Lem Crawford better than the proposition that he should go on to the Hawksley camp with May Hawksley.

The condition of his body, which included a stiff and painful shoulder, admonished him that he ought to seek the nearest shelter, and to have such a bright and pretty girl for a guide was a pleasure quite unexpected in that region.

But what was such a girl doing out there and at that time—in the wilderness of the pine woods, far from the abodes of civilization, and in the depth of winter.

Crawford was forward enough to ask her this question, as they "scooted" along on their snow-shoes toward the Hawksley camp, and she answered him pleasantly and openly enough.

"This is my third winter here," said she. "Dad wants me with him, and says that he can't get along without me."

"That is Mr. Hawksley, I presume," suggested the young man.

"Oh, yes—my father. I have got into the way of calling him dad, you see, and everybody about here knows me, and knows what I mean when I speak of dad. He has a big lumber business here, and likes to attend to it himself, and prefers to have me with him as I said. Perhaps it is partly because my lungs are not as good as they ought to be. But I am as well and strong as anybody up here, and I like it immensely. The piney odor of the forest, and roughing it in camp, are delightful to me. I can get along on snow-shoes nicely, as you see, and am handy with my rifle, too. Indeed, I do a good share of the hunting for the camp, and am proud of it. I have met the bear and the moose, but never before came across such a beast as that which you and I tackled this morning. Wasn't it a terror?"

"It was, indeed."

"And you were right brave to come to my help when it got after me."

"You were the brave one, Miss Hawksley. I acted very stupidly."

"I don't think so. You did very well."

"But how does it suit your mother?" demanded Crawford, who wanted to pursue the subject that he had started. "Is she willing that you should spend the winter in the woods? Does she stay here with you?"

"My mother?" replied the girl. "I have no mother. She died before I was old enough to remember her."

"That is a pity."

"Yes, it is a pity. But dad and I get on very nicely. We keep together as much as we can, and take care of each other. I am afraid you are badly hurt, Mr. Crawford. Does your shoulder pain you much?"

"Not very much."

"You must not try to get on too fast. We are not far from the camp, and there is no hurry."

Lem Crawford was quite willing to linger along in such company, and the day was nearly done when they reached Hawksley's camp.

It was just the same as other logging-camps, except that it was rather better than most of them, Walter Hawksley being a man who liked to have everything about him of the best quality and in the best order.

He was in the habit of starting his loggers into the woods as early as the season would allow, so that everything might be arranged in the best possible style for the work of the winter, due regard being paid to the comfort of the cattle, as well as that of the men.

The men's quarters was a long building of spruce logs, nearly ten feet high in front, with a roof that sloped back to within a few feet of the ground.

The cattle-house was much the same, except for the attachment of an open shed on the front side.

In both buildings the crevices between the logs were tightly stuffed with moss, to keep out the snow and the cold air.

Outside were the usual accompaniments of bob-sleds and grindstone, and a few pelts of wild animals had already been tacked to the rude walls.

At this camp, however, there was a building not usually seen at logging-camps.

It was a small and neat log-house, with a stick-and-clay chimney at one end, showing that the "boss" of the camp was disposed to "put on style" to at least a moderate extent.

And well he might, with such a precious

piece of humanity as May Hawksley to look after, and no right-minded logger would presume to object to the arrangement.

The clearing was a small one, shut in by the forest of spruce and pine and hemlock, and all around stretched the white expanse of snow.

At the camp Lem Crawford and his guide were met by Walter Hawksley himself, to whom May introduced her companion, with a brief account of their adventure.

Hawksley was a man who had passed the meridian of life, as was shown by the gray streaks of hair and his heavy beard; but he was strong and well built, and hardly yet the worse for the wear and tear of the active life he led.

He impressed the observer as being a man of strong will and unflinching firmness—one who was not likely to let any consideration whatever turn him from a purpose on which his mind was bent.

Among business men he passed as one of the best, clear-headed, alert, enterprising and reliable.

In his logging-camps he was regarded by the men as a first-class commander or "boss," whose will was law, and whose discipline was strict, yet liberal and just, never shirking his share of labor or danger.

They respected him; but fear was mingled with their respect.

The best of them were wont to say that he was the last man in the world whom they would care to cross.

He frowned as he listened to the girl's story, and bit his heavy mustache.

"Hemlock Hank told me that it was an Indian devil," said she as she wound up her narrative.

"I suppose it was. He ought to know. Well, my girl, if such beasts are about, I will have to narrow your range. So this young man has been hurt. I will look after him. Go home, May, and I will take him into the quarters. The cook is a pretty good rough surgeon."

The cook—an appendage with which logging-camps were not always favored—did prove to be a pretty fair surgeon, and he quickly plastered up Crawford's wounds, which were fortunately slight.

When the young man laid down that night on his bed of odorous hemlock boughs, after a hearty and most welcome supper, and after a comfortable smoke, and after listening to the yarns of his temporary comrades, he soon forgot that he had been wounded, and nothing stirred the depths of his slumber but pleasant dreams of the girl who had come to his help against the "Indian devil," and had guided him to that camp.

If there is a slumber that surpasses all others for sweetness and peacefulness, it is the slumber of the logging-camp, especially after a hard day's work—provided the other sleepers are not too much given to snoring.

The woody parts of the hemlock boughs are not felt, nor is the smoke of the continual fire perceived.

The next morning he felt quite comfortable and fully able to continue his journey.

But he did not continue it, chiefly because he wanted to see more of May Hawksley.

He did not see her. Though he watched the little house closely, he could not catch a glimpse of her, and he was not the sort of person to "cheek in" and intrude himself upon her.

He saw Walter Hawksley, who spoke to him kindly, and inquired concerning his hurts, but said nothing about May.

It was not until the next morning that he saw the girl, after he had declared his intention of going on to his own camp.

Then Mr. Hawksley invited him to step over to the little house, and there, to his great delight, he found May.

Surely he was not mistaken in believing that her face brightened up as he came in, though she greeted him merely with a nod and a friendly word.

Mr. Hawksley was quite gracious to him, and made him feel at home, though he can hardly be said to have felt entirely at ease.

"I am told that you are going on to Sloman's," said the lumberman. "Are you sure that you are strong enough to make the trip?"

"Quite so," answered Crawford. "My shoulder is a little stiff and sore; but the hurts don't amount to anything. They will soon heal. I want to thank you for the hospitable treatment I have had here."

"You would have got the same at any camp as a matter of course. Perhaps I had better send a man to guide you."

"Thank you, Mr. Hawksley; but that will not be necessary. If you will give me the direction, I can follow it with the aid of my compass."

If he had offered to send his daughter as a guide, it would have been another matter; but that was of course out of the question.

"I am glad to find you so well able to take care of yourself," said the lumberman. "But I judge that you are not yet much acquainted with our forests. Indeed, I suppose that you are quite new in the logging business."

"Why do you think so?" inquired Lem.

"I have only to look at your hands to know that they have never done any rough work. You are town-bred, of course, and it is strange that you should choose to lead such a life as this."

"But I know that I shall like it," urged the young man. "I have spent a summer in the Adirondacks, and now I want to try a winter in the Maine woods. I am quick to learn, and believe that I will soon be able to do a man's work with the other men."

"Every one to his taste. You will find Seth Sloman a good boss, though he is a little too easy with his men. You are from New York, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," answered Lem, before he stopped to wonder at the closeness of the guess.

"And your name is Crawford. It is a common name there; but perhaps you may happen to know a John Crawford?"

The young man was on his guard at once.

He had come up there for a special purpose, and it was well to be wary.

There was no telling when or where he might come across the man he was seeking.

The last question made him careful, and he considered before he answered it.

"There is a John Crawford on Broadway, in the dry-goods business there. But the name is a common one, as you say. I suppose there are plenty of John Crawfords in the Directory."

"No doubt. I speak of one who owns an iron foundry. Do you know anything of him?"

"I think I have heard of such a man," answered Lem, after a little thought. "Sort of a politician?"

"I don't know about that. I thought he might possibly be related to you."

"Mr. Hawksley, I have no living relative in the world that I know of."

"Indeed! You are quite alone in the world."

"Nearly so."

"Well, I wish you luck with your logging. Come now, and I will give you your bearings."

As Crawford left the house he stole a glance at May, and was rewarded with a bright smile.

CHAPTER IV.

A QUESTION OF COOKING.

LEM CRAWFORD was cordially welcomed at Seth Sloman's camp, especially by Hank Ward.

Hemlock Hank had brought in the skin of the "Indian devil," and had told the story of the encounter with that ferocious beast, which had made Lem in some sort a hero.

Not much of a hero, to be sure; but it was admitted that the new-comer had proved himself to be possessed of pluck, and thus he at once gained a place in the esteem of his future comrades.

Seth Sloman he found to be such as Walter Hawksley had described him—a big, strong, good-natured man, brave, active and enterprising, and almost idolized by the men who worked under him.

The quarters were in general respects similar to those of the Hawksley camp, though not so well built and fitted.

There was the same roof of long, split shingles covered with boughs, which in their turn were loaded with snow. Within was the same sleeping-place against the back wall—a long bed of odorous branches, with blankets and quilts for covering. In front of that the "deacon seat," so called, a long and broad puncheon plank with stout legs, that served both as a seat and as a table. In front of that the great fire-place, where an immense quantity of wood was consumed, and which required continual watching to keep it from burning up the building.

When Lem Crawford lay down upon those spicy branches to rest, the first night of his camp life, his novel experiences, connected with thoughts of the purpose that had brought him there, kept him awake for quite a while.

Soon his meditations fastened themselves entirely upon Walter Hawksley and his daughter May.

Who were they, and where did they come from?

Why had Walter Hawksley inquired of him so particularly concerning the John Crawford in New York, who was his father by adoption?

How did Walter Hawksley happen to know so much—or anything, for that matter—about that same John Crawford?

Was it not quite possible that he was the man who had stolen John Crawford's child, and that May was the child?

As near as Lem could judge, Walter Hawksley might be about the age of Charles Carinford, supposing him to be yet alive, and May might be the age of Maud Crawford.

There was very little in that, to be sure; but there was something in Hawksley's knowledge of the name and occupation of Maud's father, and in his inquiries concerning that gentleman.

The name of Crawford seemed to possess a strong attraction for him, which could easily be accounted for on one supposition.

Out of these facts and suppositions and guesses this young man constructed quite a

lively romance, with which pretty May Hawksley was of course connected.

In fact, she was the principal figure in that romance, and its interest revolved around her quite naturally.

But, after all, there might be nothing in it.

The information Lem had received concerning the possible presence of Charles Carinford in the logging-regions of Maine was at the best vague and unsatisfactory.

Walter Hawksley might be a steady-going man of business, with never a sensational incident in his life, who as a mill-owner might have had dealings with John Crawford as a foundryman, and there was really no reason to suspect May of being anything but his own daughter.

Besides, if Lem's suppositions and guesses were true, what possible chance could there ever be of getting at the facts and proving them?

Finally these reflections grew dim and faded away, and the young man was lost in as deep and sweet a slumber as ever a mortal could wish to have.

The next day he was assigned to his duties.

In the gang Seth Sloman, the boss, was of course the chief man.

Next in order of precedence were the choppers, who selected the trees and felled them, one of whom was master-chopper. Then came the swampers, who cut out the roads from the fallen trees to the river down which the logs were to float in the spring, one of whom was known as the master-swammer. Then the barker, who cleared the bark from the end of the log that was to slide over the snow, and lastly the teamster, who was really as important a person as any in the camp, and whose duties were the most arduous of any.

As Lem Crawford was a sort of supernumerary, or perhaps regarded as an apprentice, he was named as an assistant barker.

There was no such position in the regular gang: but it was created for the occasion, as its duties were easy, and it gave the young man good opportunities to watch the operations of others, and so learn the trade of logging.

In addition to helping clear the bark from the logs he was required to assist the teamster in loading them on the bob-sled, after which half a dozen heavy oxen dragged them away, sled and logs screaming and squealing as if they were living things that protested against the dead.

The new-comer, who was so bright and active and handy that he quickly made himself useful in this position, soon struck up a friendship with Luke Schooley, the teamster, who was quite a character in his way.

He was a short, stout, middle-aged man, with a round, fat face, which he always kept cleanly shaved, and with small eyes that were continually twinkling with suppressed merriment.

As he said to Lem Crawford, "There's lots of fun in me, I guess; but it gits mighty little chance to come out."

Luke was on the most intimate terms with his oxen, which he cared for with untiring diligence, often getting up and going out at night to see how they fared, and he well deserved his reputation as the best teamster in all the logging-camps.

The cattle doubtless appreciated his attentions, and confided in him fully, as his voice alone was sufficient to make them settle down to the heaviest possible pull, and they never needed any cruel treatment to urge them to do their best.

Luke Schooley took kindly to the new hand, seeming to have a real liking for him, and Lem Crawford was glad of this, as it was pleasant to have friends, even if he should not need them.

He had a vague idea, too, that the time might come when he would need friends.

The new life was a joy to Lem Crawford; it was so fresh and healthful and invigorating; its greatest glory seemed to be found, after all, in meal-times and bed-time.

How he could eat! And how he could sleep!

No downy bed was ever more inviting than the couch of hemlock, cedar or fir branches; nor were the daintiest viands the city could furnish ever more acceptable than the rude fare of the logging-camp.

But, before he was fairly initiated into this existence, there was trouble in the camp.

It was all about cooking.

Seth Sloman's gang was inferior to that of Walter Hawksley in having no person specially employed as cook.

It was always his way. The men were expected to take turns in cooking, and that plan always made trouble at the beginning of the season, which was generally settled somehow, after a fashion.

This season it began in the usual style, or a little more so.

Not one of the men fancied doing the cooking, as a matter of course; but Seth Sloman had persuaded two pliable fellows to undertake the task for a while, at the opening of the season.

The others knew that this was merely a temporary arrangement, and were expectant of

trouble, which began when the gang got fairly at work.

Then the boss made their details, a cook-day for each man, and notified them that they would be expected to submit to the arrangement.

It had come to the turn of Sam Boorman, one of the choppers, who sat back in the camp, and gave not the slightest sign of preparing the meal which everybody wanted.

"Come, Sam, it is your turn to cook," said Sloman, mildly and persuasively.

"You don't git no cookin' out o' me," gruffly responded Boorman. "I wasn't hired to cook."

"That won't do, Sam. You must take your turn with the rest of us. I took my turn yesterday."

"I don't know what you hired yourself for, Mr. Sloman: but I was hired as a chopper. I am ready to do my work in that line; but I don't cook."

"But somebody has got to cook, Sam."

"Somebody may do it; but I'll be darned if I cook."

When Sam Boorman said that he would be darned, that settled it.

This was rank rebellion, of course; but it was a rebellion that could not be quelled by force.

Sloman appealed to some of the others; but Sam Boorman's stand had given them backbone, and they pointedly refused to have anything to do with cooking.

Then it was that Luke Schooley came to the rescue of the perplexed boss.

"This is too bad, boys," said Luke. "We have got to eat, and somebody has got to cook. I don't wonder that you hold off from doing the cooking. I don't like it, myself; but I will do it to-day, if you fellers will kinder wait on me."

"All right!" was the chorus of the gang, who anticipated a pleasant time in sitting around and watching Luke get the meal.

The proposition met with such favor that Seth Sloman was greatly relieved.

"How do you want us to wait on you, Luke?" inquired Zeb Carter, who was a bit suspicious.

"Jest to do little things, you know. One of you may go to the brook and git a pail of water."

"I will do that," said Boorman, who had been made a little ashamed of himself by the teamster's obliging offer.

"And you, Zeb," continued Luke, "may get a little wood and mend the fire."

Another he directed to wash and peel some potatoes, after which he of course might as well put them on the fire to boil.

As he was obliged to stop out for a minute to look after his oxen, he instructed another to stir up some corn meal with salt and water.

When he returned, the corn-bread had been set to bake in the big skillet with an iron top that was used for that purpose.

Then he suggested that another should cut some slices of salt pork and put them on the fire to fry.

When these preliminaries were completed, and the meal was ready to be eaten, the gang awoke to the perception of the fact that the teamster had not lifted a finger in its preparation.

"You told us that you were going to do the cooking, Luke," remarked Boorman.

"Well, didn't I do it? You fellers kinder waited on me, and that made things easy. It's surprisin' how easy it is to cook, when a man takes hold willin'ly, as I did."

As the full force of this remark dawned upon the gang, they burst into a roar of laughter, and the upshot of the experiment was that thereafter there was no more trouble in the camp about cooking.

CHAPTER V.

SKILL AGAINST STRENGTH.

LEM CRAWFORD was sure that he had gained a friend in Luke Schooley, and believed that he had another in Hank Ward.

He soon discovered that at the same time he had acquired an enemy.

This was Jotham Rollins, a tall, big-boned, and brawny specimen of the New Englander, who was noted for his morose and uncongenial disposition, and who was one of the choppers of the gang.

In his thirty-five years of life, the greater part of which had been given to the same labor in which he was then engaged, he had not even attained the position of master chopper.

The reason of his failure to rise was found in his peculiar disposition.

He was a man who was always inclined to be controlled by his prejudices, rather than by his judgment, and he carried this trait into his daily work.

Consequently he could never be trusted to decide the question of the direction in which a tree should fall, and this is often a very important matter.

"But, when that point was decided for him, he was able to make good his boast that he

could fell a tree so as to drive a stake at a distance of eighty feet from the butt.

But this was the only distinction he had gained, and, as he was blind to his own faults, he considered himself as an unappreciated and ill-used man.

As Luke Schooley expressed it, he had soured on the world, and a ton of sugar couldn't sweeten him.

Jotham Rollins's mean and envious nature showed itself in the dislike he took to Lem Crawford, partly because it was supposed that the new comer was a city chap, who was beyond the necessity of working for a living, and had joined the gang for pleasure rather than for pay.

This supposition, which tended to raise Lem in the estimation of the others, made Jotham Rollins hate him.

His hate showed itself immediately after the young man's arrival in camp, in a series of ill-natured remarks and innuendoes, and especially in the epithet of "greeny," which he applied to Crawford on all occasions, until he changed it for the yet more obnoxious appellation of "sap-sucker," which was intended to give the stranger the poorest possible opinion of himself.

Lem bore this with exemplary patience, though everything that Jotham said to him or at him was spiteful, and much of it was actually insulting.

He either passed the slurs and cuts and blows without notice, or good-naturedly tried to laugh them off or turn them aside.

But this would not do.

The more he showed his patience and good temper, the more spiteful and abusive the other became.

At times there was a flush in the young man's cheek, and a vivid light in his eye, which ought to have warned his persecutor that he was pushing his attacks too far, but Rollins only took a malicious pleasure in perceiving that his blows hurt.

At last he carried his abuse to an extreme that roused Lem, and produced a rupture.

They were all seated around the fire after supper, when Rollins "tackled" the new-comer again, and began to score him more severely than ever.

"Does your mother know you're out, greeny?" he demanded, in his sneering way.

Lem made no answer.

"I'd like to know what in thunder ever sent such a young fool as you up here into the woods, anyhow. What business have you got here?"

"As much business as you have," replied Lem.

"If it's any business besides tryin' to take the bread out of honest men's mouths, I'd like to git hold of it."

"I have not taken any bread out of your mouth."

"But you want to, and that's what you are sneakin' about here for. For my part, I'm tired of sap-suckin' and spyin', and I mean to put a stop to it."

"You do?"

"Yes, I do, and I'm up to your little game, too. I know what you're here for."

"Indeed! What is it, then?"

"Your dad sent you up here, to git you out of the way because you was wu'thless, and to keep you from goin' to prison."

"You are a liar," quietly retorted Lem.

It had been evident from the snapping of the new hand's eyes that he had about reached the limit of his patience, and when this came out it produced the explosion that was expected.

Jotham Rollins stared at first, as if he could not understand this act of rebellion.

Then his face turned red, and he jumped up, and advanced upon the young man.

"Call me a liar, will ye? Darned if I don't smash yer head into punkin-sass!"

Crawford had also risen, and stood ready to receive him.

But, before they could come together, the others interposed, and pushed and pulled them apart.

"No fighting in here!" ordered Seth Sloman, who could be as arbitrary as anybody when he chose to be, and who was quite capable of enforcing his commands when the occasion required him to do so.

"All right," said Rollins. "But as soon as I ketch him outside, I'll give that young whipper-snapper such a frailin' as will make him keep a still tongue in his head the rest of the season."

"And I give you fair warning," replied Lem, "that I will stand no more of your abuse—not another bit of it. You had better keep your hands off of me, too. As a man who don't want to quarrel, I give you that advice."

"Jest hear him! The chicken crows like a rooster, and he calls himself a man. Wait till I git a fair chance at you, you young sap-sucker, and I'll take the conceit out of you."

This ended the unpleasantness for the night.

After a while Luke Schooley went out to look after his oxen, and he signed to Crawford to follow him.

At the cattle-house the teamster, instead of inquiring into the slight sprain in Bright's nigh foreleg, began at once to talk about the disturbance of the evening.

"I liked it amazin' well, my boy, the way you spunked up to that cross-grained critter. But I tell you, Lem, he means what he says, and you've gi'n him jest the openin' he wants. He will go for you outside, and will give you the wu'st kind of a slatherin'."

"I don't think he will," replied Lem.

"You don't? Well, you bain't got the age and the heft to stand up to sich a customer as that, and I don't see what's to help you."

"I am not afraid of him."

"Bean't you? Mebbe you ain't afeard of anythin'; but it's well to be a leetle wary sometimes. This thing worries me, and I don't know what's the best thing to do about it."

"Just do nothing at all, Luke. I thank you for your sympathy and good-will, but really do not believe that I need any help."

"Don't you? I'm glad to hear that; but it's amazin'."

"If I don't give a good account of myself, Luke, and put a stop to his tongue-lashing, I will quit the camp, and never come back."

"I'd be tarnation sorry to have you do that," said the teamster, as he proceeded to bestow affectionate attentions upon his beloved oxen.

The next morning, when the loggers set out for their daily labor, Jotham Rollins was one of the first to leave the quarters.

Lem Crawford was close behind him, though he did not hurry himself, nor did he seem to be at all excited.

As soon as they were fairly out in the open, Rollins turned upon him.

"Now I'm goin' to polish you off, you sneak-in' young sap-sucker. Call me a liar, will you?"

"I will," promptly replied Crawford. "You are a liar, and a bully, and a fraud."

"Jewhillikens! Jest hear the young whiffet! Won't I tan his bide, though?"

"You shall have a good chance to do it. I am willing to fight you a fair fight, and make an end of this sort of thing."

"You fight me? I'll take you across my knee and give you a sound spankin'. That's what I will do."

"Pitch in, then. All I ask is a fair show."

"That's right," shouted Hank Ward. "The youngster wants a fair show, and I mean to see that he gits it."

All the others, including Seth Sloman, had come out of the quarters, and were gathered in a circle about the disputants.

Most of them regarded the new hand with looks of pitying sympathy.

They doubtless admired his pluck more than they approved his discretion.

Crawford at once pulled off his coat, and threw his cap on the ground, and Rollins followed his example, though he protested that there warn't no use in takin' that trouble for a whippersnapper that he could handle as easy as he could a skeered rabbit.

It certainly looked as if the tall lumberman might easily make good his boast.

He towered over his young antagonist in height, and was considerably his superior in weight.

Moreover, his muscles had been developed and hardened by years of swinging his ax in the woods.

But Lem had the great advantage of a complete course of pugilistic training, having been taught and practiced in boxing by a professional athlete in New York, whose most promising pupil he had been.

The style in which he put himself in position showed this, and the opening of the encounter quickly proved the superiority of skill to "main strength and awkwardness."

Jotham Rollins, big of fist and long of reach, led off with a blow that was intended to be a crusher, and doubtless would have been if it had reached its object.

But the youngster easily evaded it, and replied with a stinger on his opponent's jaw that made the big fellow stop and stare.

Then he rushed forward again, dealing sledge-hammer blows that were parried almost without effort, and his wild career was suddenly stopped by a facer planted on his prominent nose, that made the blood spurt out upon the snow.

By this time the youngster had the full sympathy of his comrades, who applauded and encouraged him, delighted with the scientific manner in which he had begun to take the starch out of the big bully.

He gave Rollins no time to recover from his astonishment, but sailed in vigorously, raining blows upon his face and head, every one of which told.

When he stepped back to breathe, one of his antagonist's eyes was nearly closed, and his lip looked as if a bumblebee had stung it, while his nose presented a pitiable appearance.

But Jotham was still full of fight.

Roaring and bellowing like a mad bull, he made a blind rush at the youngster, striking out with all his force.

Lew lightly moved aside, and got in a forcible blow under his left ear when he had him in the right position.

The tall lumberman toppled over like a pine that is felled, waved his arms wildly, and measured his length on the snow.

He picked himself up slowly, and remained seated there a few minutes before he rose to his feet.

"That will do," said Seth Sloman, as he stepped forward and gave his hand to Crawford. "I guess nobody about here will worry you after this, young man."

Jotham Rollins sulkily remarked that he did not feel like chopping that day, and slouched off toward the quarters.

"You had better lay off a bit," replied Seth. "Crawford, you may take his place to-day, and get a little practice."

The new hand was abundantly able to do this, as he did not show a mark, and was apparently as fresh as before the engagement began.

He went to the work with Luke Schooley, who congratulated him warmly upon his victory.

"That's one of the blessedest things that could ha' happened," said the teamster. "I don't know how you did it. It's jest amazin'."

"I am glad it is over," remarked Lem.

"Mebbe it ain't all over, though. Jotham's a mean and cantankerous cuss. He'll carry a grudge ag'inst you, and like as not will try to work it out."

CHAPTER VI.

A PAIR OF CONSPIRATORS.

AMID the novelties, and labors, and pleasures and excitements of life in the logging-camp, Lem Crawford was not forgetting the purpose that had brought him up into the pine woods.

He had reflected upon it much, but had not been able to see his way clear to make a move in any direction.

The more he thought about it, the more difficult and uncertain his task seemed to be, and he could form no idea of where or how he was to begin his quest.

He was a member of the logging gang; but was not bound to it by any ties that might not readily be loosed for awhile, or broken altogether.

But it would not be worth while to drop those ties until he could get hold of a clew that was worth going to work upon.

Thus far he had found nothing that looked like a clew, with the exception of the fancy that he had formed concerning Walter Hawksley and May.

He made inquiries about these two in the camp, and learned from Seth Sloman all of Hawksley's history that was known in that part of the country.

It appeared that Walter Hawksley had been a resident of Bangor for fully seventeen years, during the greater part of which time he had been engaged in the lumber trade, first as a merchant, then as a mill-owner, and finally going to the fountain-head of the business and getting out his own logs.

In these capacities he was highly esteemed, though it must be admitted that as a man he was not generally liked, and that he seemed to have few if any warm friends.

He had come, Seth Sloman believed, from one of the Middle States, bringing with him his daughter, then an infant, and had remained a while with his sister, since dead, who was at that time a resident of Bangor.

Then he had branched out into the lumber business, in which he had been very successful.

This was all that Lem Crawford was able to learn at the camp about the man, and no opening presented itself for gaining any further information.

But, if the young man from New York was making no progress in his quest, there was another person who had been stirred up by his arrival to unusual exertions.

In the game of life, as in games of cards, it is a vast advantage to be able to look into your adversary's hand and know what cards he holds.

Supposing Walter Hawksley to be Lem Crawford's adversary—a fact which has not as yet fully developed itself—he believed that he could get and keep that very advantage.

He considered himself able to find out all about the other, while keeping the young man entirely in the dark concerning himself.

Shortly after young Crawford's brief stay at that camp Walter Hawksley was seated in his own house, in close and confidential intercourse with a young man.

May was not there, or they could not have been likely to speak so freely as they did.

The young man was Walter Hawksley's nephew, Lewis Driggs, the son of his dead sister.

He was a few years older than young Crawford, and was a lanky young man, and well-favored by nature as to his personal appearance, dark-haired and sallow, and with a disposition that had never made him popular with his associates.

"I understand, uncle Walter," said he, "that while I was away May brought a strange young chap here with whom she had had some sort of an adventure."

"That is so, Lew; but I suppose you have heard all there is to tell about it."

"Perhaps I have; but I don't like that sort of thing."

"No? Well, I don't see how you are to help it, as it is over and done with. Nor do I see how it could have been helped when it happened. But I have given May strict orders that she shall not go beyond a certain limit without permission."

"That's good enough, if she will mind. Who was the fellow, anyhow?"

"Just what I want to know. That is the very point I expect to cover. He was bound for Seth Sloman's camp when he met her."

"Did he give no name?"

"Yes, Lew. His name is Crawford."

Lew Driggs could hardly turn pale; but he looked a little sallower than usual just then, and his countenance was expressive of surprise and perplexity.

"Crawford?" he exclaimed.

"Crawford, and he is from New York."

"The dickens!"

"I got that out of him very neatly. I suspected something right away. I was naturally suspicious, you know. But when I began to question him about John Crawford, he seemed to take the alarm at once, and started in to head me off."

"He can't be John Crawford's son, uncle Walter."

"Of course not. He is too old for that. But he may be some sort of a relative, though he denied it. It was his way, rather than anything he said, that made me suspect him."

"It is hardly possible that after all these years John Crawford or anybody else should have struck any sort of a trail."

"It is not a bit probable, I grant you; but no man ever knows what chance may send him or take from him. Just think of the chance by which that young chap met May and came to this camp."

"That was queer, uncle Walter. If he should happen to be one of those Crawfords, it would show that he has luck on his side."

"Again, Lew, supposing him to be an emissary from John Crawford—which we must take hold of as a possible thing—we have not the faintest idea of what he knows or has guessed at. But, of course, if that should prove to be his errand, he would never have come up here without something definite to lead him, and that is just what I must find out."

"How will you do that?" demanded Driggs.

"The best of luck, my boy, is not likely to win against brains and a persistent purpose, and I mean to look into the young fellow's hand and see what cards he holds."

"But how will you do it?"

"Oh, I will do it. You may be sure of that. I am not the man to miss any chances. I only wish that you would take a firm hold of your chances and work them up. If you are ever to marry May, you ought to make hay while the sun shines."

Lewis Driggs's face fell.

"It is very easy to say that," said he, "but some things can't be done as well as others. There is no use trying to make hay in winter, and she is so cold to me that there seems to be precious little chance of gathering a crop there."

"You are not a fool, Lew; but you are lacking in some points. Faint heart never won fair lady, and that's as true up here as anywhere. I have brought her here, as you know, so that nobody but you can have a chance at her, and it seems to me that it will be your own fault if you fail to make a point."

"Lord knows, uncle Walter, that I would go through fire and water for her. I think the world of her; but she positively dislikes me."

"Make her like you. You must be more amiable toward her, and prove to her that you care for her. You ought to be able at least to win her respect and confidence. Do that, and I will guarantee the rest."

"And you will look after the Crawford chap?"

"Indeed I will. It stands me in hand to do it. I will soon get hold of the strings, and then I will know how to attend to his case."

Just then May came in, bright and glowing, filling the little log house with sunshine.

"I do declare," said she, "you look just like a pair of conspirators."

She had hit the mark, and they glanced at each other sheepishly, like men who had been found out.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "Now tell me what you have been conspiring about?"

But they did not tell her.

CHAPTER VII.

LOOKING INTO A HAND.

THERE was a mail-carrier who made pretty regular trips between the nearest settlement that boasted a post-office, and the series of logging-camps in which Seth Sloman's and Walter Hawksley's were counted.

He was employed and paid by the proprietors, and was a great convenience and comfort to the loggers, managing to pass over the route and call at the various camps several times in the course of the winter.

Mounted on a stout horse, deep snows and blinding storms were nothing to him, and he generally contrived to pass the night at one of

the little log taverns that were sparsely scattered along the solitary routes.

If he failed to make the connection, he was not much put out, as he built a big fire, made a couch of boughs on the snow, and slept there soundly, wrapped in a blanket or a buffalo-robe.

The mail-carrier during the season with which we have to do was known as Indian Joe, because he was an Indian, and his name was Joe—at least, the name by which the loggers knew him.

He was a stolid, wiry little man, of infinite endurance, and was presumed to be entirely faithful, having no knowledge of anything connected with his mails except their safe conveyance between the settlements and the camps.

The nearest tavern to the southernmost of the camps was Bill Stansill's, located where a small stream emptied into the Penobscot.

Its enterprising proprietor had established this outpost of civilization for the benefit of winter travelers, and did quite a thriving business during the logging season, at the close of which he returned to the settlement which he claimed as his home.

The house was rudely but substantially constructed of logs, and a yet ruder building had been erected near by for the accommodation of horses and cattle.

The interior was divided into two rooms, one of which contained a fireplace, and served as the cook-room, sitting room and bar room of this very primitive hotel.

The other was the sleeping room, fitted with bunks or berths in tiers, not unlike the arrangements of a tramp's lodging-house in the city.

At Bill Stansill's tavern, near the close of a clear, crisp winter day, arrived Indian Joe, with his saddle-bags loaded with the mail which he had collected from the logging-camps to which he was attached.

It happened that he was the only guest, and he was heartily welcomed.

He first attended to the wants of his horse, giving him the best of food and bedding that the establishment afforded.

Then he repaired to the sitting-room, and proceeded to do ample justice to the rude but plentiful meal which the proprietor prepared for him.

Bill Stansill was naturally hungry for news, and hammered away vigorously at his guest with questions, to which the replies of Indian Joe were slow and unsatisfactory.

So much labor was needed to extract a little information from him, that the game was not worth the candles.

While they were thus employed, Walter Hawksley arrived at the tavern.

He also stabled and cared for his horse before seeking any comforts for himself.

This, indeed, was the custom of the travelers at all the little taverns in the wilderness.

It was not to be expected that the landlord should act as hostler, as well as clerk and cook and barkeeper.

It could be seen that the master logger was not a favorite with the proprietor of this tavern, though he was, of course, treated politely, as his money was as good as any other man's.

While Stansill was preparing supper for the new-comer, Walter Hawksley had a whispered conversation behind his back with Indian Joe.

He appeared to be making a proposition from which the mail-carrier dissented.

Joe's scruples were finally overcome by the production of some coin which speedily went into his pocket.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Joe," said Hawksley aloud. "I sent a letter by you, in which I made a serious mistake. As it relates to an important matter of business, I want to get the letter and change it."

"Dat all right, Joe guess," responded the mail-carrier, as he emptied the letters from his bag upon the table.

Bill Stansill glanced around suspiciously, and went on with his cooking.

Hawksley eagerly looked through the pile of letters, and his face lighted up when he found the one he wanted.

Most of the addresses were in the heavy, crabbed handwriting of the loggers; but this was a neat and business-like script.

Yet it showed none of the heavy, up and down strokes of Walter Hawksley's style.

It was directed to John Crawford, at New York.

"I want a bit of the steam of your tea kettle, Bill, to open my letter with," said the master-logger.

He got it, and the landlord again glanced at him suspiciously.

When he opened the letter he read it slowly and carefully, which was rather strange, supposing him to be already acquainted with its contents.

An ominous frown contracted his brow as he read, and his lips closed tightly under his heavy mustache.

Bill Stansill had left the fire-place, and, as Hawksley came to the last page of the letter, the landlord passed behind him.

"Won't you have a drop of somethin' strong before supper, Mr. Hawksley?" he asked.

"No!" replied Hawksley with an oath, as his face turned red, and he covered the paper with his hand.

"Well, you needn't be so snappish about it. You used to like a bit that way."

Hawksley finished reading the letter, and replaced it in the envelope.

"After all, Joe," said he, "perhaps it is not worth while to make any change in that letter. I guess I will let it go as it is, as I have written another that will straighten up the business."

He sealed it, and handed it with another letter to the mail-carrier, who placed them in his saddle-bags.

Then he got up and spoke pleasantly to the landlord.

"Now, Bill, I will take a drop of Santa Cruz, if you've got it. You ought not to bother a man when he is busy."

"I didn't know," replied Stansill, "that you could be bothered so easy when you was jest readin' a letter that you had writ, yourself."

The two guests passed the night at the tavern, and after breakfast in the morning the mail-carrier went his way, and Hawksley returned to his camp.

"I'd like to know what sort of deviltry is under that business," muttered Bill Stansill, as the master logger rode away.

Hawksley reached his camp while it was yet daylight, after a long and hard ride, and as soon as possible sought an interview with his nephew.

"I've done it, Lew," said he.

"Done what, uncle Walter?"

"Looked into that Crawford fellow's hand, and seen his cards. It is just as I suspected. He belongs to the John Crawford stock, and is up here on that business."

"How did you get hold of that?"

"I knew that if my suspicions were true he would be writing a letter to New York by the first chance, and so I rode down to Bill Stansill's tavern yesterday, and overhauled Indian Joe. By the use of a little money I got that letter, and of course I opened it and read it before it went on."

"You don't let anything stand in your way, uncle Walter."

"Indeed I don't. If I did, how would I ever get on? You had better imitate me, if you want to succeed in the world. Well, Lew, the letter was to John Crawford, and the young fellow addressed him as father. Of course he can't be John Crawford's son, and I don't pretend to understand that point in the business; but there is enough that I do understand to enable me to put him where he belongs and know how to deal with him."

"What does he say, then?"

"Enough to let me know that he is on the scent. Indeed, he spoke plainly of the purpose that brought him here. He told all about the adventure with that beast in which May was mixed up, and about his visit to this camp. He did not say that he had learned anything here; but I could read between the lines that he had some vague suspicions. The conclusion I reached is that he knows little as yet, though he suspects and guesses, and that we must keep him from finding out anything more."

"I don't see how he can find out anything," said Lewis Driggs, "unless it should be by luck. As I said before, it was a queer chance that brought him and May together, and that sent him to this camp."

"Chance, my boy, is a capricious and uncertain element, that don't enter into my calculations. I don't care for chance."

"The preachers call it Providence," remarked Lew.

"Call it what you please, it won't do to bet on. Brains and a steady purpose are the reliable cards, and they will win every time. Chance would never have given me a look at that letter, if I had waited for it a lifetime; but I got the letter and read it, and now I have looked into the young fellow's hand. The next point, my boy, must be made by you."

"What am I to do?"

"I will tell you shortly."

CHAPTER VIII.

"A MURDERER AT HEART."

In the logging business, when the land had been explored during the autumn, and a sufficient number of the right sort of pine trees had been discovered, within a reasonable distance of each other, for a winter's work, it was customary to obtain authority from the State, in the case of State lands, or from the owners, in the case of private proprietorship, giving permission to cut timber within specified limits.

Though one grant sometimes adjoined another, their boundaries were reasonably well defined, and it was seldom that the loggers pushed into territory which they were not entitled to use.

When one party persisted in attempting to encroach upon the grant of another, there was likely to be trouble, if not a collision.

It happened that the Hawksley grant bordered on the Sloman grant, and that, for the purpose of being near the river and other neces-

sary conveniences, each party had located its camp near a corner of its territory, so that they were but a few miles apart.

Thus they were neighbors, and there was occasional visiting between them, chiefly on Sundays, when the pursuit of pleasure did not interfere with the labor of logging.

Consequently there was no surprise in the Sloman camp when Lewis Driggs sauntered over there, and proceeded, as Hemlock Hank expressed it, to make himself more numerous than agreeable.

Lew Driggs was not a favorite there.

Indeed, it would have been hard to find any place—at least, outside of some of his resorts in Bangor—where his presence was considered a boon.

But loggers everywhere were always hungry for news, and he was well received because he was supposed to bring a stock of that precious commodity.

The camps were always hospitable, too, and any stranger was always sure of being entertained in them to the best of the ability of the occupants.

Lew Driggs was there to get news, as well as to give it, and he heard something that made his eyes snap.

Among the stories that Seth Sloman's men had to tell, the recent encounter between Jotham Rollins and Lem Crawford held the chief place.

That story was told to him very fully and particularly, together with the previous provocations, and all the language and actions of the two belligerents.

It was not told, however, in the presence of Rollins, as nobody wanted to hurt the feelings of the defeated combatant.

Since his ignominious failure as a fighter, he had been quite meek and docile, though more silent and sulky than ever.

Lew Driggs looked curiously at Lem Crawford, as if wondering what sort of magic there was about him that had enabled him to vanquish so easily such a formidable antagonist as the big chopper.

It might have been noticed—in fact, it was noticed—that after he had heard that story the visitor "thickened up" with Jotham Rollins, and appeared to prefer his society to that of any of his comrades.

Luke Schooley observed the pair as they were conversing, apart from the others, and called Lem Crawford's attention to them.

"Chummin', those two," said Luke. "Well, I don't know but they go together tol'able. They are bad eggs, both of 'em, and I'd bet old Bright ag'in a yearlin' that they are hatchin' out some sort of deviltry at this minute."

"Who is that Driggs?" inquired Lem. "I judge that he has no work to do, or he wouldn't be over here now."

"Of course he hain't got no work to do. He don't have to work unless he wants to, and it's precious seldom he wants to I guess."

"What is he doing up here, then?"

"Why, he is Walter Hawksley's nephew."

"Ah-h-h! And you think they are hatching mischief. I wouldn't be surprised, Luke, if they were."

Before Lew Driggs left the camp, he had a final interview with Jotham Rollins, and gave him some money.

"Will that do to begin on, Jotham?" he asked.

"Yes, and I am sure to get what you said if I—" "If you fix him—yes. You know that accidents will happen."

"That's so, and I don't know anybody I would rather have an accident happen to than that interloper—curse him!"

The very next day the visit of Lewis Driggs and his intimacy with Jotham Rollins bore fruit.

Rollins was felling a tall pine that stood on a side-hill.

The master chopper had ordered the direction and manner in which it should be brought to the ground, and had gone elsewhere for awhile.

At a little distance away, Lem Crawford had cut a sapling, and was trimming it into a hand-spike to be used in loading the logs upon the bob-sled.

Two small trees had been cut down across the line of the proposed fall of the pine, for the trunk to rest on when it reached the ground.

They were a little way to the left of an imaginary line drawn from the foot of the tree to the place where young Crawford was stationed.

He was partly concealed by a bush near which he was working, and was just then out of the range of vision of Luke Schooley, who was near by with his ox-team.

But he was visible from the side-hill at the butt of the tree.

Not clearly visible, but surely liable to be seen by the chopper if he should turn his eyes in that direction.

It was the duty of the chopper to look around and see if there was any person near the line of fall of the tree.

If there was any danger he was, of course, expected to give warning.

No warning was given, and Jotham Rollins continued to chop, and Lem Crawford to trim

his handspike, each apparently oblivious of the actions of the other.

It was not until the giant pine began to crack and totter that Luke Schooley, who had walked a little way from his team, saw where and how his young friend was employed.

At the same time he perceived that the tree was taking a direction that was sure to bring it down upon the new hand, who was clearly unconscious of any peril.

Luke shouted to his friend at the top of his voice.

Lem Crawford jumped up, and saw his danger; but it was too late to escape.

The giant pine was falling with constantly accelerated velocity, and the next instant it came to the ground with a thunderous crash, shaking the earth in all directions, and filling the air with snow and pine-needles and cones and fragments of boughs.

Lem Crawford was no longer visible.

Jotham Rollins stood there at the butt, looking toward the top of the fallen tree, as if he expected to see something there—or to miss seeing it.

Luke Schooley was never a profane man.

As a rule he detested profanity, and frequently rebuked it.

But on this occasion he turned himself loose in a surprising manner as he stood and shook his fist at Rollins.

"Curse you, you durned black-hearted scoundrel!" he yelled. "Don't you know that you have killed a man, you hell-deservin' villain?"

He ran to the top of the fallen tree, fully expecting to find under the trunk the mangled body of his young friend.

But his surprise and gratification were extreme when he heard Lem's voice raised cheerfully.

"All right, Luke; no harm done."

The teamster quickly got an ax, and ran to the rescue of the victim.

The barker was also on hand, and Hank Ward, who was the master swamper, hastened to the scene with one of his men.

Crawford's escape had been miraculous.

Jotham Rollins was wont to boast of his ability to fell a tree so as to drive a stake, and it may be presumed that at this time he had done his best—or worst.

But the young man had started up when he was aroused by Luke Schooley's shout, and that action had fortunately taken him just outside of the line of the falling tree.

Though a bough had struck him and borne him down, it happened to be one that was loaded with foliage, that broke the force of the blow.

When the teamster reached the spot he found the young man pinned to the ground by a branch that lay over his breast.

The branch was soon cut away and removed, and he rose without assistance.

A few slight bruises were the only results of his encounter with the giant pine; but it was acknowledged by all present that his peril had been extreme, and that his escape from death was wonderful.

Zeb Carter, the master chopper, was there when Lem was extricated, and Seth Sloman had also arrived.

When the affair had been briefly explained to them, they turned at once to Jotham Rollins.

He was quietly seated on the stump of the fallen pine, from which position he had not stirred during the excitement.

"What did you mean," angrily demanded the master chopper, "by falling that tree on that man?"

"Mean?" sulkily replied Rollins. "I didn't mean nothin', of course. How was I to know that the greeny was there? He didn't have no call to be there."

"He was busy there, and you might have seen him if you had looked. It was your duty to look and see if anybody was in the way."

"How was I to see him? I did look. He must ha' been hid under a bush there."

"I remember the bush," continued Carter. "I told you to drop the tree to the left of that bush, but you sent it right on top of the bush."

"I never supposed you was anyways partic'lar about it, and I didn't mind a yard or so. If folks will go and hide under bushes when trees are fallin', I can't help it. I don't furnish them with sense."

There was no use in arguing the matter with him, and the general disposition was to say that a miss was as good as a mile, and to let the occurrence pass as an accident.

Yet, when it was remembered that Jotham Rollins hated young Crawford bitterly, and that he was able to drop a tree exactly where he wanted to, the prevalent impression was that it was a very queer kind of an accident.

But there was no proof that it was otherwise than an accident.

Luke Schooley afterward went with Lem Crawford up the side-hill to the stump of the big pine, to judge whether a person behind the bush would have been visible from that position.

The bush, however, had been crushed and

flattened by the tree, and there was nothing left to support their opinion.

"It's no use talkin' Lem," said the teamster. "That man is a murderer at heart. We can't prove it; but it's a fact. I never heard of a meaner way than that to pay off a grudge."

"I hope he had no worse reason," remarked Crawford.

"Why, what worse reason could he have had?"

"There might have been something worse."

CHAPTER IX.

FUN WITH A BEAR.

"I SHALL never forget, Luke, the time when you undertook to do the cooking," said Lem Crawford to his chum one Saturday evening.

"Kinder got the boys that time," replied the teamster with a chuckle.

"You did, indeed. I have seen some queer things in camp; but that was the best of all, so far. There must be plenty of fun in you, Luke."

"Well, there is lots of fun in me; but it don't find much chance to crawl out. The cattle know it—bless your heart!—and you ought to see 'em wink at me as they take it in when we are goin' along and talkin' together. Why, old Bright fa'rly shakes his sides sometimes. Oh, it's there, Lem, and you may git a chance to see some of it afore the season's over. You and I will have a little quiet fun to-morrer, if you say so."

"What sort of fun?"

"We'll go a-fishin'—go down to the river, and cut holes in the ice, and see if the trout or pickerel will bite. I must think to turn George Washin'ton out, too."

"Who is George Washington?"

"One of the pair of steers that I keep to relieve the others at odd times. He has been sorter mopy lately—been shut up too close, I guess—and it'll do him good to run about and have his own way a bit."

"I will be glad to go with you, Luke, and I will take my rifle, as I may come across some rabbits, or perhaps start up a deer."

Sunday was usually a day of actual rest in the logging-camp.

The men were in the habit of sticking to their couches of fir or hemlock boughs, dozing or "lazing" until the sun was far up in the sky.

Their occupations when they did arise were generally limited to mending their clothes, writing letters, and such little matters.

But the teamster was not one of the late sleepers.

His cattle always made demands upon his time and attention, and he was obliged to stir himself early to care for them.

This was a labor of love with Luke, and it was easy for him to bring out his chum, as Lem Crawford, whose labors were light, was never a late sleeper.

They were not the only men in the camp that day who were intending to vary the usual Sunday routine by a little diversion.

The swamplers, or men who cleared the roads for dragging the logs, had discovered a hollow tree which they believed to be the winter den of a bear, and they were going to rout out the beast.

Hemlock Hank was at the head of this party, which also included Zeb Carter, the master chopper.

Luke Schooley preferred his fishing excursion.

"There's lots of fun in foolin' with bears," said he, "but sometimes it's more fun for the bears than for anybody else."

So Luke and his chum took their fishing-tackle and an ax, with Lem Crawford's rifle, and made their way to the river.

There they cut holes in the ice, and were soon pleasantly and profitably employed.

Either "the sign was right," as Luke said or they bad struck a lucky hour, or the pickerel happened to be very hungry for fat pork that morning.

Within an hour they had a fine string of the spotted beauties; but then the rush slackened, and soon the fish ceased to bite.

Lem Crawford grew tired of fishing for nothing, and said that he would go and look up some rabbits whose tracks he had seen in the snow as he came to the river.

So he took his rifle, and soon disappeared in the forest, leaving Luke at the water-holes to wind the lines.

The teamster also became disgusted with the sport of catching nothing, and his attention was attracted to the shore by a low and not unmusical bellow.

It was music to Luke, who recognized the voice of George Washington, the relief steer which he had that morning turned loose to get a little recreation.

The animal had followed him, had seen him there on the ice, and had called him.

He obeyed the call at once, and went ashore, where he was occupied fully fifteen minutes in caressing and talking to the appreciative steer.

When he went back to the river, he had hardly got fairly out on the ice when he stopped short.

To his great surprise and astonishment he saw a big black bear seated on its haunches near the hole in the ice, freely devouring the fine fish which he and Lem had caught.

This was something wonderful as well as unpleasant.

What, in the name of common sense and natural history, was a bear doing out there on the river, in the middle of winter?

Then he reflected that it might be the bear whose winter-quarters a party from the camp had gone to beat up.

It had doubtless got away from them, and, finding a nice mess of fish so handy, had concluded to take a lunch before seeking another resting-place.

His bearship was evidently enjoying himself, in spite of his troubles.

He would pick up a fish, look it over with the eye of a gourmand, and proceed to eat every bit of it except the head.

Luke Schooley saw no sort of fun in that appropriation of his property.

He naturally wanted to save at least a fish or two, that he might have something to show for the morning's work.

It occurred to him that the bear could be scared away.

But, though he cried "shoo!" in his most authoritative manner, Bruin paid no attention to him, but coolly continued his meal.

The enraged teamster went a little nearer, and picked up a chunk of ice, which he threw at the thieving bear.

It struck him on the nose, and aroused him to action at once.

But it was not the right sort of action. Instead of being frightened he became belligerent. Instead of running away, he ran after his assailant! To be broken of his rest, and then shut off from his meal, was too much for his good-nature.

Dropping a fish that he had partly eaten, he quickly got on his all-fours, and started for Luke at a surprisingly rapid pace, considering his uncouth gait and the presumable stiffness of his joints from his confinement in a hollow tree.

Luke naturally turned and ran, as he had no weapon, even his ax having been left out there on the ice.

But he was short and stumpy, and always a very indifferent runner at best.

He cast a glance behind as he reached the shore, and perceived, to his extreme consternation, that the bear was rapidly overtaking him.

Before him lay the snow, in which he might be expected to make yet poorer progress than on the ice.

The game had gone against him most decidedly.

It was one thing to scare a bear, and quite another to be scared by a bear.

It would have pleased him better for the brute to eat his fish than to feed upon himself.

Just then a happy thought occurred to him—nothing less than an inspiration.

George Washington was still there in the forest, at a little distance from the shore, and fortunately his back was turned to the bear.

Luke made the best possible time to the side of the steer, spoke to him, and leaped astride of his back.

He seized his neck with the left hand and with the right gripped his tail, which he proceeded to twist vigorously, at the same time emitting a series of unearthly yells and whoops.

George Washington, astonished and terrified by this insulting and startling treatment, set off at the top of his speed, galloping like a quarter horse, and bellowing like a wild bull of Bashan.

The teamster did not fail to keep an eye on the bear, which had nearly caught up with him when he mounted the steer, but began to fall behind when George Washington broke into a gallop.

Bruin mended his pace, however, and after a while it was hard to say which was likely to win the race.

Logger Lem, returning to the river from an unsuccessful pursuit of game, heard the extraordinary bellowing of the steer, and turned his steps in that direction.

Nothing could have surprised him more than the spectacle of George Washington as he bounded with great strides through the forest, head up and mouth open, and bearing on his back the squat figure of Luke, who was twisting the tail and yelling as if his life depended on his exertions. Logger Lem had to laugh.

He did not need to ask what was the matter, even if there had been a chance to inquire, as close behind the strange steed and its rider, came the bear, puffing and panting with his exertions, but evidently determined to overtake his quarry.

His chum had afforded him fun of an unexpected nature.

But this was a serious matter, as Bruin was thoroughly in earnest, and the steer might at any moment stumble, or perhaps throw his rider.

Crawford rested his rifle against the trunk of a tree, took a careful aim at the bear, and fired.

Fortunately the bullet struck the brute's foreleg at the shoulder joint, and broke it.

Bruin stopped, looked at the wounded limb, and began to lick the blood that flowed from it.

Then he looked up, saw his assailant standing there, and, with a growl of rage, started for him on three legs.

But by this time Lem had reloaded his rifle, and he fired again, with such good effect that the bear fell over.

With an effort his bearship got up on his three legs, but staggered, and tumbled over again, his life-blood dyeing the snow plentifully.

Lem reloaded at his leisure, and sent a third bullet into the brute's brain at close quarters, to make sure.

Of course he could do nothing with the carcass of the bear, and he hastened to the camp for help.

Luke Schooley had arrived before him.

After he discovered that the bear was no longer in pursuit, the teamster had in vain attempted to stay the mad career of his steed.

George Washington was not to be halted, but kept right on, galloping and bellowing, until he reached the camp.

All the men were out, and they greeted the teamster with roars of laughter.

"Here we come, gaul-darn our skins!" shouted Luke, striving to make the best of his predicament.

George Washington quieted down as soon as reached the cattle-house, and his rider dismounted, and was made to tell his story.

Lem Crawford came in shortly, and added the finishing touches.

A party followed him back with a sled, and brought in the dead bear.

"It was our bear that you found, Luke," said Hank Ward. "I know him by this gray patch on his pelt."

"I wish you would take better care of your bears, then," grumbled the teamster.

Lem Crawford was acknowledged to have been the hero of the occasion, though George Washington came in for his share of praise.

"There's lots of fun to be got out of bears," Luke observed, confidentially, to his chum before they turned in at night.

CHAPTER X.

MAY HAWKSLEY AND THE MOOSE.

MAY HAWKSLEY was restive under her father's order confining her to the camp or its near vicinity.

To express the fact plainly, she kicked against it.

She had so long been accustomed to having her own way and doing as she pleased, that it went against the grain with her to submit to control.

Especially when she could see no sufficient reason for it.

The only excuse Walter Hawksley gave for his harsh edict was her encounter with the "Indian devil."

But May considered that a mere pretense.

She might roam those woods for years, and the chances were a thousand to one that she would not meet such another monster.

He had mentioned the moose as an object of terror; but May was not afraid of moose.

She had met one of those monarchs of the forest when she was alone, armed only with her light hunting-rifle, and had vanquished him.

Though the moose is proverbially hard to kill, her lucky bullet had pierced his heart, and she had sped back to the camp as if on wings, and had got a sled there before the wolves had found her moose, and he had been brought home in triumph, and she had his immense antlers to show for her exploit.

She was privately of the opinion that it was not alone her encounter with the "Indian devil" that had restricted her roaming.

It was quite probable that her meeting with a strange young man had something to do with the matter, though it did not seem a bit likely that she would come across that young man again.

Her cousin Lew, it was reasonable to suppose, had put a word in, and her dislike for him increased, while her remembrance of young Crawford was more than kindly.

She was not to go beyond a certain limit without permission, and it was impossible to obtain permission.

Again and again had she applied for it, but was always put off, or met with some excuse.

At last she determined that she would endure that tyranny no longer.

Her health was suffering, she said, and she would surely perish of weariness, if of no other disease, unless she could get permission to roam the woods and find a use for her rifle.

Walter Hawksley, pressed to the wall, finally gave his consent; but on condition that she should be accompanied by her cousin.

This was anything but a pleasant condition to May.

Lewis Driggs did not shine as a hunter.

There was too much active exertion in the occupation to suit him, and he had not followed it enough to become anything like an expert, either in tracking game or bringing it down.

Some of the loggers said that he was afraid.

But such a condition was better than no permission, and May accepted, none too graciously, the uncongenial companionship of her cousin.

So they set off, May with her light rifle, and skimming over the crusted snow like a fairy in a fur pelisse.

Lewis Driggs had a heavier weapon, which he handled awkwardly, and he was by no means a good hand—or foot—with the snow-shoes.

Consequently, May could easily keep ahead of him if she wanted to, and she grumbled at his slowness and awkwardness.

It seemed to him, however, that the occasion was a good one for obeying the instructions of May's father about pressing his suit.

He was really as much in love with her as he could possibly be with anybody besides himself, and pecuniary considerations also urged him to use his best endeavors to effect her capture.

He made several attempts to tell her the tale of his love as they went along; but, whenever he was on the point of coming to the point, her attention was attracted to a rabbit or some other object, and she darted away like a bird.

Finally he broke into the subject desperately, and placed himself fairly before her as a suitor.

"You know that your father wants it, May," he said, "and I am sure that I will make you a good and kind and loving husband. There is nothing I will not be willing to do for you, and you shall always have what you want and go where you please."

"There is one thing I want of you just now," she answered, "and you will please me greatly if you will grant me a small favor."

His sallow face brightened up at once.

"What is it, May?"

"Just drop that subject. I am not thinking of marrying anybody, and don't want to be worried about that sort of thing."

"But you must marry somebody, May, some time. There is no hurry. I only want your promise. You know what your father thinks about it."

"Let dad marry you, then. I don't want to."

His face darkened suddenly with anger and mortification.

"You have no right to speak to me like that, May Hawksley. You are really insulting. I believe you are thinking of the young chap you picked up and brought to the camp."

"Indeed, Mr. Driggs? I did not know that; but perhaps I am. Oh, Lew! there is a moose!"

There stood the antlered monarch of the forest, suddenly discovered, at a distance of some thirty paces from the hunters.

He had halted as soon as he saw them, and they also came to a halt.

It was a bull-moose, and a splendid animal, nearly as large as a horse, with great spreading and branching antlers, a well-defined hump, and a long tuft of hair, like a goatee, under his throat.

"Come away," said Driggs, a little hoarsely, as if there was fear in his voice. "You don't want to fool with that fellow. He is dangerous."

"Oh, psbaw! I have seen moose before now, and have killed one."

"But you would never have such luck again. I know what they are. You may fill them full of lead, and they will fight and kill you."

"We must have that beauty, Lew. Is your rifle ready?"

"Come away, I tell you! This won't do, at all."

The moose put an end to this argument.

It was not the season at which the bull-moose easily becomes enraged and ferocious; but this one may have had his wrath aroused by a red scarf that May Hawksley wore about her neck.

Whatever had excited him, he was eager for fight.

Lowering his head, he charged upon the girl, at every leap breaking through the snow, that was up to his knees.

She hastily leveled her rifle, and fired.

Her bullet struck him fairly in the breast; but he came on without seeming to notice it.

May turned and fled.

Lewis Driggs had already set her the example, getting away from the scene of action as speedily as possible as soon as the moose made evident his intention of charging.

When the girl started, he was at what might be considered a safe distance; but she relied upon her snow-shoes to enable her to overtake him and to escape the moose.

The enraged animal was plunging after her with long leaps, but in an ungainly manner, as the snow hindered his free movement.

May Hawksley, light and skillful, was safe enough, barring accidents.

But an accident came.

A strap of one of her shoes gave way, and the framework turned on her foot.

She could not stop to fasten the strap, with the moose so near her, nor could she go on with the shoe as it was.

She perceived her peril, and uttered a cry of terror.

Lew Driggs heard it, but scarcely slackened his speed.

But there was another at hand who heard it, and who had both the will and the ability to help her.

When the moose was nearly upon her, the report of a rifle rung through the forest, and a bullet struck him behind his fore shoulder.

With the usual instinct of wild animals, he turned to the quarter from which the shot had come, to wreak his rage on his new assailant.

It was Lem Crawford, who had fired at close range, and had immediately begun to reload his rifle.

He was thus engaged when the moose charged upon him with lowered head, after the manner of a mad bull.

The young man was aroused to a sense of his danger by a scream from May Hawksley, who recognized at once the champion who had freed her from her own peril.

Before he could get out of the way the moose was upon him, making for him as if to toss him in the air upon his stout antlers.

With horns and hoofs the infuriated animal could soon make a flip of a man.

Lem Crawford, who was cool and collected, saw but one chance of safety.

It was a desperate chance, but the only one that offered, and it was suggested to him by the manner in which the moose held his head, with his nose nearly touching the snow.

Crawford was still on the crust, and could easily look over the top of his adversary's head.

Dropping his rifle, he sprung lightly between the spreading antlers, and alighted on the neck of the moose.

Turning himself skillfully and quickly, he locked his legs around the neck of his novel steed, and grasped an antler with one hand, while with the other he drew his long and sharp hunting-knife.

It did not seem likely that he would get a chance to use it.

The moose, after an unsuccessful attempt to unseat his rider, dashed off through the woods at the top of his speed, and it was as much as the young man could do to keep his position.

But this headlong race was not destined to last long.

The monarch of the forest was losing blood rapidly from two wounds, and was surely becoming exhausted.

Blinded with pain and rage, he ran wildly against a young pine, and the shock threw him to the ground.

Lem Crawford took advantage of this opportunity without the loss of a second.

He stuck his keen knife into the neck of the moose, fortunately severing the jugular vein.

Then he had nothing to do but to stand aside and watch the dying struggles of the noble animal.

May Hawksley, who had adjusted the strap of her snow-shoe, overtook him there.

Her looks spoke her gratitude more eloquently than her words, and she went back with him to get his rifle.

What had become of Lewis Driggs?

He had stopped when he heard Crawford's shot, and had watched the subsequent proceedings until the moose fell.

Then he returned slowly, and joined the two as they were reloading their rifles.

May Hawksley took no notice of him, and Lem Crawford merely looked at him.

"I hope you are satisfied now, May," said he. "If you have had enough of this, I will take you home."

"Home!" she replied, with a merry laugh. "I thought you must be there by this time, Lew."

"I got out of the way of that beast, as was natural and proper; but I supposed that you were with me, or I would not have gone so far."

"Queer that you never looked around to see where I was."

"I think, Miss Hawksley," said Lem Crawford, "that I ought to see you safe home, or at least a good part of the way."

"I don't feel a bit afraid; but I am very much obliged to you, sir."

"Do you know the direction of your camp?"

"My cousin does, I am sure. He was making a bee line for it awhile ago."

Driggs colored under this imputation; but made a stand against Lem's proposal.

"We will not trouble you, sir," said he. "Miss Hawksley needs no protection but my own."

"Oh, Lew!" exclaimed May. "Suppose we should meet another moose!"

This quieted him for awhile, and he went on in front, while Crawford and May followed him together.

The girl doubtless wished him further away, and again she proceeded to harrow up his feelings.

"I always considered you quite awkward on snow-shoes, cousin Lew," said she; "but you made such splendid time when you got away

from the moose, that I have changed my opinion. If you could be persuaded to put on that speed again, you might reach the camp in a little while, and send some of the men to bring in the big game."

He made no reply to this thrust, but fell back to where they were walking.

At least he could play the part of the dog in the manger.

When he took part in the conversation, it was to make a supercilious remark to May's companion.

"How does it happen that you are not at work to-day, young man?" he asked, with a sneer.

"If you want to know, you can ask Jotham Rollins," promptly replied Crawford.

The shot told, and he had not another word to say.

When they came in sight of the Hawksley camp, Lem Crawford took leave of May, receiving from her a friendly invitation to visit her when he could.

CHAPTER XI.

BILL STANSILL'S DISCOVERY.

SETH SLOMAN'S logging-camp was a temperate one, but not total abstinent.

He believed in giving his men a glass of grog occasionally, when the weather was bad, or the work especially severe.

It was also, as he supposed, advisable to keep a supply of liquor on hand, for cases of sickness or wounds or other emergencies.

When the keg ran dry, because of an unexpected leakage, he proposed to send to the nearest available place to replenish his stock.

The nearest available place was Bill Stansill's wayside tavern.

Hank Ward was appointed as the messenger, and he chose Lem Crawford as his companion, as that young man had expressed a desire to go with him.

They set off before daybreak, carrying snow-shoes and skates, the former to be used for travel over the snow, and the latter for those parts of the river where the ice would admit of skating.

They were also armed, as the wolves had a habit of being too familiar, and were sometimes dangerous.

But they had a lucky and speedy trip, with no adventures of any kind.

There was so much clear ice on the river, that their skates did good service, carrying them forward at such a rapid rate that they reached Bill Stansill's hostelry before the sun had gone down.

They were warmly welcomed and well entertained, and their appetites were something amazing.

The landlord was of course well acquainted with Hemlock Hank, and he recognized Lem Crawford, who had stopped there with the supply team that brought him up the river.

On that occasion the young man had made a reputation for liberality and geniality, and Stansill had retained a friendly remembrance of him.

After supper, when these three men were gathered around the fire, mingling smoke with conversation, the tavern-keeper, who was noted for his talkative propensity, was unusually silent.

He seemed to have something on his mind, and frequently cast curious glances at Lem Crawford.

Hank Ward took note of his silence, and spoke to him about it.

"I would like to know what has come over you, Bill," said he. "As a general thing you scarcely let another man git in a word edge-ways; but thisevenin' you are as close as a clam at low water. Is there anythin' the matter?"

Instead of answering his questioner, Stansill turned sharply upon the other.

"So your name is Crawford," he remarked.

"Yes," responded Lem, a little surprised.

"Lem Crawford?"

"Yes."

"Lem-u-el Crawford, in fact?"

"Just so."

"And you hail from down to York?"

"You have struck it right, Billy," said Hank Ward. "Is there anything the matter with him? I guess you had better ease your mind."

"I will, Hank. It frets me to hold onto each a thing as I've got there. There's something that I ought to tell this youngster, and I have made up my mind to do it. You may as well hear it, too, as I know you to be a square man."

"What is it, Billy?"

"It is about Walter Hawksley."

The attention of Lem Crawford was immediately enlisted.

"About Walter Hawksley and this young man. And I don't care a cuss if anybody should go straight to Hawksley and let him know that I told it. I don't owe him no favors and he can't hurt me, and what's right is right."

"But we ain't likely to tell," observed Hank.

"I know that. All the same, though."

The tavern-keeper went on to tell of the arrival of Indian Joe, and afterward of Walter Hawksley, at his tavern, and of Hawksley's request to the mail-carrier that he should be al-

lowed to correct a mistake in a letter of his that was in the mail-bag.

"I had my suspicions right away," continued Stansill, "because I was sure that I heerd the chink of cash jest afore that. So I kept one eye on my cookin', and t'other on Hawksley."

"He got the letter, and opened it by steamin' it at my tea-kettle, and read it; but he didn't correct no mistake into it. He said he guessed he wouldn't do that, and so he sealed it up ag'in, and put it back in the bag."

"Nothing very strange about that," remarked Lem. "What has it to do with me?"

"That's jest what I'm coming to."

"On ginaler principles I am allus suspicous of Walter Hawksley, and it seemed to me that it took him a long time to read a letter that he had writ himself. He read it so keerfully."

"Arter a while I slyly slipped around, so as to pass behind his back, and got there jest when he'd come to the last page."

"You oughter seen him hide that letter as quick as he could; but he wasn't quick enough."

"Schoolin's a big thing. I've had my sheer of it, an' can read most writin' as easy as print, and this was mighty nice writin', not a bit like Walter Hawksley's. I've seen him write, and I know his hand."

"The name that was signed to it wasn't his name, either."

This was the tavern-keeper's climax, and it produced the expected sensation.

Hank Ward whistled, and Lem Crawford jumped up.

"What name was signed to it?" eagerly demanded the young man.

"Crawford—Lem-u-el Crawford."

Lem wrote his name at the request of Bill Stansill, who pronounced it exactly similar to the signature at the foot of the letter.

"That's the scurviest trick I've heard of in a long time," said Hemlock Hank. "What does it mean, Lem?"

"It means that I had a letter in that mail, and that Walter Hawksley wanted to know what I had written in my letter. I suppose he had reasons that suited himself for playing that game, and I think I can guess what they were; but I must ask you to excuse me at present from saying what my suspicions are."

"Are you goin' to stand it?"

"Of course I am not; but I am not sure what I will do about it. What I do will be done quietly, as there is no use in making a fuss. If you two want to do me a favor, you will say nothing about the business to anybody."

They promised to keep the secret, and Lem warmly thanked the tavern-keeper for his kindness in making known his discovery.

As they went home he confided to Hank Ward his belief that Walter Hawksley had a grudge against him, the reason of which he did not wish to divulge, but which had nothing to do with the logging business or the State of Maine.

He went on to say that Lewis Driggs probably shared his uncle's grudge, and that there was ground for suspecting that his conferences with Jotham Rollins at Seth Soman's camp were connected with the "accident" which soon afterward nearly cost a life.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Hemlock Hank. "It's a darned sight more likely than not. Lew Driggs is mean enough to do that kind of a trick. I'll tell you a little story about him, Lem."

"I was out huntin' deer once, and Lew Driggs was in the party. He was the only one who had a dog, and a real nice, smart hound it seemed to be."

"We started a stag, and the hound soon brought him to bay, though he was alone."

"When we got there, the critter had burt the dog, and he didn't want to go in any more."

"Lew Driggs tried to git him to sail in; but he wouldn't budge."

"Then he called the dog; but he didn't so much as wag his tail."

"Then he picked up his gun—did Driggs—and that hound scooted off like a streak of greased lightnin', and we didn't see nothin' more of him."

"No more did Driggs, as the hound never went back to his camp."

"He had put up with the feller, you see, as long as he could, and had lit out when he couldn't stand him no more."

"There ain't much in that, some folks might think; but it's what first set me ag'in Lew Driggs. I tell you, Lem, it's a mighty bad sign for a man when his own dog goes ag'in him."

This idea seemed to prey upon Hank Ward's mind, as he repeated it several times during the journey.

Just before they reached the camp he halted to impress the fact upon his companion.

"I won't say a word to anybody about the letter or the other thing," said he; "but I think as you do, Lem. It's a mighty bad sign for a man when his own dog goes ag'in him."

CHAPTER XII.

A PLAN TO BEAT LUCK.

LEM CRAWFORD had learned something by his visit to Stansill's tavern, and what he had

learned was very important to him, as he believed.

It seemed to him that he could see through Walter Hawksley's purpose as easily as if that enterprising lumberman had declared it to him.

It was clear to him that the letter had been opened with the object of ascertaining who he really was, and what was the business that had brought him up there.

He knew, also, that his letter had disclosed those points sufficiently for the comprehension of so clear-sighted a man as Hawksley.

Thus his adversary had enjoyed the privilege, unlawfully obtained, of looking on his hand, and might be expected to take measures to defeat his purpose.

The "accident" of the big pine was an extreme measure, supposing it to have occurred through the connivance of Lewis Driggs; but Lem no longer had any doubt of its origin or its object.

If the arts of the murderer were to be used against him, it would be necessary for him to exercise the greatest vigilance.

At the same time he had gained an advantage which, if not equal to that which had been secured by Hawksley, was very important to him.

He, also, knew whom and what he had to meet.

He was quite convinced that Walter Hawksley was Charles Carinford, and that May Hawksley was Maud Crawford.

There was no proof of this; but the matter was settled in his own mind.

He had thus far been so signally favored, too, by the chance or Providence which Walter Hawksley derided, that he began to feel confident that the way would open before him, and that the facts would be brought to light in some unexpected manner.

One thing was certain—he would not write to New York again unless he could send his letter through Bill Stansill.

Mingled with these unpleasant perplexities were sweet thoughts of pretty May Hawksley.

Since the adventure with the moose she was continually in his mind, and his memories of her animated his quest, and inspired him to stick to it, in spite of difficulties and dangers.

While his thoughts ran upon these people, he was by no means forgotten by any of them.

May Hawksley not only worried her father and cousin by repeated and flattering mention of him, but kept to herself many thoughts that she did not care to express to anybody.

Since the meeting with the moose she had confessed inwardly again and again that she admired him immensely.

She had never yet met any young man, in the woods or out of it, who seemed to her to combine so many qualities that were worthy of admiration.

Compared to him, her cousin was not to be considered—he was worse than nobody.

The stranger was nothing to her she declared to herself again and again; but she would never, never, never marry her cousin Lew, not even if her dad should order her to.

The state of her mind was at least partially visible to Walter Hawksley and Lew Driggs, who held earnest discussions concerning her and the young man to whom she had evidently taken a fancy.

"May will scarcely look at me since she last met that chap from New York," complained Lew.

"I suppose you refer to the time when she met the moose," replied his uncle.

"Well, you may put it so if you want to; but I don't count the moose as having had anything to do with it. She has taken a notion to that chap, and that is what the matter is."

"But it must be admitted, Lew, that you did not behave very brilliantly on that occasion."

"And the other fellow did, you think. I supposed that May was with me. How was I to know that she wasn't?"

"By looking, I should say. You know, Lew, that if the other fellow had not come to her rescue the moose would have killed May, and then you would have been my heir. Did you think of that at the time?"

"Of course I didn't! How can you ask me such a question? How could I think of anything but getting away from that wild beast?"

"The other fellow thought of something. He shot the moose and then killed it, and it must be admitted that his work was bravely and skillfully done."

"He had the chance," grumbled Lewis.

"But you had the first chance, and I suppose your rifle was quite as good as his."

"You know, uncle Walter, that I don't pretend to be an expert at hunting."

"Of course you don't. I wish I knew of something that you are an expert at."

"He didn't kill the moose with his rifle, either. He killed it with a knife. I had no knife."

"There was something else you lacked, too. Come, my boy, your excuses only make the matter worse. That was a bad piece of business for you, and the less we say about it the better. Women like men who are brave and

skillful—men who can protect them—and I am sorry to say that you don't seem to fill the bill. But we must take you as you are."

The moose adventure was a sore point with Lew Driggs, who was willing enough to drop the subject.

"I tell you, uncle Walter," said he, "the Crawford chap has got luck on his side, and there's a great deal in luck."

"Bah!"

"You may try to make light of it; but luck counts, and that is where he is solid. Just think of the luck he has had so far. No sooner had he struck this neck of woods than he met May, and was brought to this camp. Then that tree fell on Seth Sloman's ground—fell right on top of him; but, by the most wonderful luck, it barely missed him, and he came out with scarcely a scratch."

"It is true that not one man in a thousand would have escaped being killed by that accident."

"Just so. That's where his luck comes in. And when the moose got after May, who would have thought that he would happen to turn up just at the right time? What was it but luck that brought him there?"

"He had sense enough to make good use of his luck, too, and that is a strong point. Now, Lew, admitting that he has luck on his side, and that he is smart enough to take advantage of it, we have all the more reason for putting brains and a steady purpose into our work against him."

"That is a fact."

"And we must not let anything stand in our way, so long as we can be safe."

"Just so, and I don't think you can say that I let anything stand in the way when I took a hand in the game. Nothing but his infernal luck saved him. You said a while ago, uncle Walter, that you wished you knew of something at which I am an expert. That is the sort of thing I am an expert at, and now I've got another plan prepared."

"What is that, Lew?"

"To-morrow or next day Sloman's men are going to work on Farr's Hill, next to our boundary line. I want you to take our men over there, and work alongside of them."

"For what?"

"You know that the two camps will start a rivalry at once, about the fastest choppers and the best swambers, and the biggest loads, and the quickest trips to the river, and all that sort of thing. It's as likely as not that a skirmish might be started up, and somebody might get hurt."

"That might hurt us as much as anybody, my boy."

"I don't think it need to. You know, too, what sort of a place Farr's Hill is, and how many dangers there must be in getting logs down its steep side. I am solid with Jotham Rollins yet, and accidents are quite liable to happen there."

"But why do you want our men to go to work there?"

"Because I want to have a good excuse for being around and overseeing things. Rollins is not the brightest man in the world."

"Well, Lew, I believe there is something in you, after all. I will do as you suggest. It may look a little queer to our men that we should start in there before the easy timber is exhausted; but I can make that right with them."

"Perhaps, uncle, luck may favor our side this time."

"We must try to force it. There is one consolation, my boy. If luck, as you call it, should go against our side, that fellow has no earthly chance of proving anything, unless you or I should give it away to him."

"That's a good point."

"And we are not likely to give it away."

"Not if we know ourselves."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RIVAL LOADS.

LEWIS DRIGGS had not exaggerated the dangers of getting logs down steep hills or mountain-sides, and the difficulties of the task are sometimes appalling.

In fact, the danger grows out of the difficulty.

Difficult work and dangerous work usually mean the same thing in the logging business.

Farr's Hill was so named after a logger who had lost his life there a few years previously, and whose tragic death had made the place memorable.

At the same time it had caused it to be avoided.

It well deserved to be called a mountain, as its height was something considerable, and on the side which Seth Sloman's men attacked it ran up so steeply that it was impossible to traverse it with teams.

This steep slope was covered with a scanty growth of hemlock, spruce, and pine, and was also heavily covered with snow.

At the head of the first slope rose a nearly precipitous wall of rock to the height of some twenty feet, and from the top of the wall there stretched back a broad and level plateau,

which was heavily timbered with magnificent pine trees.

That plateau was the lumbermen's El Dorado, and those big pines were what they were aching to get at, in spite of the difficulties and dangers attending their transportation to the river.

They took the oxen up to the plateau at its southern end, where the slope was comparatively easy, and began work there.

In that quarter it was not a difficult matter to get the logs down the hill, as the work could be done with oxen and a drag.

The drag was made by cutting down a hemlock tree of good size, and trimming the limbs near to the trunk, so that the portions that were left stood out like prongs.

This was attached by a stout chain to the upper end of a log, and the cattle, attached to the lower end, pulled the log down the slope, the drag acting as a hold-back, to prevent it from going too fast.

Occasionally it would hurry them in lively style, but the only real danger lay in the possible breaking of the chain that held the drag, in which event the log would have rushed down the hill, destroying the team, if not the teamster.

But the trees at that end of the plateau were soon exhausted, and at the same time the slope had been worn so smooth by the sliding of heavy logs that the cattle could no longer keep their footing.

At the same time, too, came the news that Hawksley's gang had begun work at the northern end of the plateau, and were advancing toward the middle.

This news was highly inspiring to the men.

Not only would it be much livelier, and consequently pleasanter, to have another gang working near them; but they knew that sharp rivalries would inevitably spring up between the two camps, and that exciting contests might be expected, such as were wont to act upon the loggers like the arrival of a circus upon a boy.

As a matter of fact, the rivalry was in order at once, and a contest was soon begun.

After a deal of bragging, with regard to fast chopping, big dav's works, and the like, in which each side claimed the advantage, but produced no proof that would be accepted by the other side, Walter Hawksley proposed a trial to determine which gang could take the heaviest load to the river.

The challenge was accepted by Seth Sloman, and a bet was made between the two bosses.

Instantly the excitement in the two camps became intense, not only from the desire to show the prowess of the men and the teams, but because the side that won was to share the winnings.

Each side had a number of logs at the foot of the hill, from which point the start was to be made.

The teams were limited to eight oxen each, and Luke Schooley's cattle were in excellent order for the match, in spite of the hard work of the winter.

This fact was made the subject of special comment by Seth Sloman, in a little speech he made to his crew just before the contest began.

"I want you to do your level best, boys," he said, "but not because there is money up on this thing. I don't believe in betting as a rule; but at such a time as this it helps to stir folks up and put life into them."

"Hawksley's crew can claim one more man than we have, counting their cook. I don't know but they might claim two more, if Lew Driggs counts."

This sally produced a general laugh.

"But I am sure that mine are the best men," continued Seth; "and when it comes to cattle, you know that we are 'way ahead of them there. Just take a look at Hawksley's oxen, if you want to see a passel of scrawny, worked-down critters. Then cast your eyes over Luke Schooley's cattle! I tell you, boys, there ain't a man in the State of Maine who can work a team through the winter, and bring it out in such good condition as Luke can."

This produced three cheers for Luke Schooley, who was deservedly a popular man in the crew.

"But I can rely on you, boys, not to leave everything to the cattle. As much depends on the men as on the team, and I am sure that you will all do your best and make every pound of beef you've got count."

He gave the signal, and the crew went to work with a will.

The bob-sled had been strengthened to stand the pressure of the trial load, and the logs had been well peeled so as to reduce friction, and handspikes, levers, and even rollers, had been prepared, so that the men might assist the labors of the oxen.

A tackle and fall had also been made ready for the purpose of loading the logs, which were brought to the side of the road; and the road itself had been gone over by the swambers, who had improved it to the best of their ability.

These preparations were necessary, as the work to be done was calculated to test to the utmost the strength and endurance of the entire camp.

Three great logs were loaded on the bob-sled, two to drag the ground, and the third on top of them, and they were stoutly chained together and to the sled.

Then came the start.

The men placed their handspikes and levers in the most available positions, and every man bent to the task of aiding the cattle to set the big load in motion.

Luke had only to speak to his oxen, and they pulled their best.

The stout sled groaned and squealed, and the big logs creaked and sung as they started on their journey over the smooth surface of hardened snow.

Every inch of the way the men were at work assisting the cattle, under the intelligent direction of Seth Sloman, who at the same time worked as hard as any of them.

The toughest place on the road was a rise near the river, and the fact was understood by all that at that point they would be required to exert every ounce of strength they had.

Just before they reached the rise the boss produced a bottle, and dealt out liberal doses of rum to all the party except the cattle.

If this had no other good effect, it stimulated them to put forward all their powers of lifting and pushing and pulling.

Seth was obliged to restrain them, so that they should not give out before passing the very worst point.

Luke Schooley gave an occasional chirrup or word of encouragement to his team, and they settled down to their work in a style that was beyond admiration.

Slowly the straining sled and the heavy load moved up the slope.

Very slowly, as every inch was a tug, and yet more slowly as the tug grew harder, until, when the logs had nearly reached the top of the rise, the entire outfit seemed about to come to a standstill.

This was the supreme moment, upon which everything depended.

Seth Sloman shouted to the men to throw all their soul into the work, as well as all their strength, and they did it with a will.

Lifting, and heaving, and pushing, and tugging, they strove and strained to the utmost, as if their lives depended on their efforts.

Then Luke Schooley, usually so mild and gentle, astonished his cattle by yelling at them like a demon and scoring their backs again and again with his heavy goad.

The big load took a fresh start, and passed over the crest of the ridge just when the men were too exhausted to raise a cheer.

This was the end of the tug, as the rest of the way was a gentle and easy slope down to the river.

Then the question was, which load would be first at the river?

Hawksley's crew had a road that was a little shorter than the other, if not a little nearer, and, when Sloman's men got to the river, they discovered that their rivals had got in just ahead of them.

But there had been no trial of speed.

The question was which crew had brought in the biggest load, and that was to be settled by measurement.

The surveyor's rule was applied by Zeke Barnes, Hawksley's master chopper, who had been appointed to that duty by mutual consent.

With many eager and experienced men watching the process, there was no chance for him to cheat, if he had been inclined to do so.

The measurement was known to others as soon as Zeke Barnes was ready to announce it, and the issue of the trial was that the Sloman load proved to be considerably the heavier of the two.

Though they were crestfallen, the Hawksley crew accepted the verdict without grumbling.

All but Lewis Driggs, who pushed forward from among his uncle's party, with intent to create a sensation and provoke a quarrel.

"This is a fraud!" he shouted. "A mean trick has been played on us. That top log was not put on the load until just before it reached the river."

"You are a liar!" quickly exclaimed Lem Crawford, who stood nearest to him.

The accusation was so palpably and brazenly false that his anger was excusable.

Lew Driggs, who was not in his shirt-sleeves as the others were, pulled a pistol from his pocket, and fired it hastily.

Lem Crawford perceived his action and meaning, and dropped to avoid the shot.

But he sprung to his feet the next instant and dealt his antagonist a blow that sent him to the ground.

Then he picked up the pistol that had fallen from his grasp.

If Lewis Driggs had counted on a general fight as the consequence of his rash act, he had greatly mistaken the temper of the men with whom he had to deal.

Either side would have been ready to fight, on sufficient provocation, with the weapons nature gave them, or with the handspikes they had made for themselves; but the use of fire-arms in a neighborly quarrel they looked upon with horror.

The report of the pistol had a quieting effect upon those sturdy men of Maine.

If Crawford had been hit, there would have been trouble, as his friends would have secured the assassin at any cost.

But he had not been touched, and a miss was as good as a mile, and all were of the opinion that his assailant's punishment was just, as far as it went.

When Lew Driggs rose to his feet, he looked around among his uncle's crew, but saw no sign of sympathy there, and sneaked back to his place.

Lem Crawford stepped to where Walter Hawksley was standing and smiled as he handed him the weapon.

"It seems to me, Mr. Hawksley," said he, "that your nephew ought not to be allowed to carry a pistol."

"I am quite of your opinion," replied the uncle.

Lew Driggs attempted to explain that he had supposed that Crawford was about to strike him, had drawn the pistol to protect himself, and it had been discharged by accident.

"Just so," answered Lem, with another smile. "You are too careless to be allowed to carry a pistol."

CHAPTER XIV. PERIL IN A SLUICEWAY.

IT may be doubted whether anybody really believed in Lewis Driggs's explanation of his pistol-shot.

Lem Crawford most assuredly put no confidence in it.

He believed that a deliberate attempt had been made to murder him, and his friends Luke Schooley and Hank Ward were of the same opinion.

If the attempt had succeeded, he would have been out of Walter Hawksley's way, and Lew Driggs would probably have been able to escape the consequences of his crime.

But the explanation, lame as it was, served as an excuse for taking no further action, and the affair was allowed to drop.

The only visible result was that Driggs was disliked and shunned more than ever, by his own party, as well as by others.

The two crews continued to work near each other, as amicably as if nothing unpleasant had occurred, and the plateau on Farr's Hill was rapidly stripped of its best timber.

To get the logs down to the foot of the hill it was necessary to employ the plan known as a dry sluiceway.

A number of tall and straight but young trees were cut and closely trimmed.

These were laid side by side and end to end from the top of the steep slope to the bottom, forming a shallow trough down which the logs could slide.

As the upper end of the sluiceway was at a wall of rock, there were some twenty feet of perpendicular distance that were not thus provided for.

But the loggers were equal to the emergency, and they overcame the difficulty quite handily.

A log would be hauled to the edge of the plateau and unloaded there.

Then it was slewed around until it was nearly balanced over the edge, and the upper end was chained and "fiddled."

To the chain a stout rope was made fast, with which a couple of turns or more were taken around a big tree that stood near, so that a man or two could ease the log down to the trough.

Two others stood near the foot of the wall of rock, to guide it with pike-poles into the position it should occupy.

When it was resting fairly in the bed of the trough, the "fid" was knocked out, the chain fell off, and the big log went spinning down the slope at a fearful rate of speed.

Its velocity was so great, and the friction of the sluiceway so severe, that its passage was accompanied by clouds of bark and smoke, and it seemed liable to tear everything to pieces.

But the logs usually made the trip without any serious accident, plunging at the foot of the hill into the snow and a bed of boughs that had been prepared for them.

Seth Sloman's men had cleared out all the available timber on their side of the plateau, and had only three logs left to send down the hill.

The swamplers had gone with Seth Sloman to another location, to clear out a road from the river to another bunch of timber, and but few men were left on the plateau.

But they were believed to be enough to manage the three logs, especially as they had the whole afternoon for the performance of the task.

Lewis Driggs had made a visit to that part of the plateau in the morning, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing whether the Hawksley tract had been encroached upon.

But he had taken advantage of the opportunity to have a few private words with Jotham Rollins, whose station was at the edge of the plateau.

By this time the sluiceway had been used so much that the bark had been worn off from the trunks that formed the trough.

In fact, they had been so torn and worn by the swift passage of heavy logs, that there was much less of them than there was when they were put down.

One of the three remaining logs had been sent down all right, and the second was balanced over the edge of the plateau, properly chained and fiddled, and with a rope taken from the chain around the big tree.

The warp, as the rope was called, was managed by Zeb Carter and Jotham Rollins, and the pike-pole men were below Hank Ward and Lem Crawford, the former having been detailed to that duty, instead of going with the swamplers.

The log was carefully and slowly warped down over the wall of rock, until one end had touched the sluiceway, the other resting on the plateau above.

It was just then that Hemlock Hank discovered a serious fault in the sluiceway.

One of the trunks of which it was composed, at a little distance from the head of the trough, had been worn until it was broken by the passage of the last log.

The upper end had changed its position, gradually rising until it projected upward from the bottom of the trough, forming a serious snag.

It would be dangerous to send down another log until this fault was remedied, as it was likely that the entire sluiceway would be torn up, and perhaps the log would be lost, if no other damage should be done.

As soon as Hemlock Hank noticed this obstruction, he "sung out" to the men above, bidding them hold the log until the sluiceway could be repaired.

"All right!" shouted Zeb Carter.

With his assistant he took a couple more turns with the warp around the big tree, making the log fast until matters should be ready for its further progress.

Hank Ward and Lem Crawford scrambled down the side of the hill, with their axes and pike-poles, until they reached the damaged portion of the sluiceway.

It was at once evident to the experienced eye of the master swamper that the broken tree must be taken out and replaced with a new one.

They speedily got it out; but the rest of the job was a matter that required more time and labor.

A tall and straight young pine grew at a little distance, and Hank settled upon it as just the piece of timber he needed.

They soon had it on the ground, and proceeded to trim it carefully and cut it to the proper length.

As the repair of the sluiceway promised to occupy considerable time, Zeb Carter went off to cut a handspike, directing Jotham Rollins to call him when everything was ready for sending the log down.

Ward and Crawford, by carrying one end at a time, brought the cleaned trunk of the young pine to the side of the sluiceway, and rolled it over to its position.

It was found to be a little too long, and Lem Crawford got into the trough to cut a piece off the top.

Hemlock Hank stood at the side, a little way below, holding the stick with his pike-pole so as keep it from sliding down.

Crawford cut off his end quickly and neatly, and threw the "chunk" away.

Then, with the assistance of Hank's pushing from below, he got the stick into the required position, and was pleased to perceive that it fitted exactly.

He was still standing in the trough, giving a few finishing blows to the work with the head of his ax, when he was startled by a crash and a roar above him.

At once he looked up, and saw the big log coming down the sluiceway as if it had been shot out of a cannon!

The warp had given way, and the heavy piece of timber, relieved from restraint, had started on its downward course, dropping over the edge of the plateau with a thunderous crash.

The blows of his ax had made so much noise that he had hot heard the snapping of the warp, or anything to warn him of the beginning of the log's destructive career, and the danger was right upon him as soon as he perceived it.

Hemlock Hank, who was watching him closely, had been equally oblivious, but was the first to see the start of the logs.

"Jump for your life, Lem!" he shouted.

But Lem could not have jumped if a thousand lives had depended upon it.

Before he could make an effort—before he had straightened himself up—the great log had thundered down upon him!

CHAPTER XV.

LEM CRAWFORD'S WILD RIDE.

HANK WARD looked eagerly at the big log as it shot by him with a deafening roar and a cloud of smoke and splinters.

His quick glance could scarcely follow its rapid flight; but he saw, or fancied that he saw a dissolving view of Lem Crawford rushing down the sluice on the top of the log.

He stepped to the trough as soon as the log had passed, and looked into it.

To his great surprise and delight, he saw no mangled body there, nor any hideous mixture of blood and fragments of flesh.

Looking down the sluiceway, he saw nothing of the kind in that direction.

If that heavy log, rushing downward at such a terrific rate of speed, had struck the young man in the trough, it must have killed him so quick that he could not know what hurt him, and would have crushed his body out of all possibility of recognition.

What had happened?

Had Crawford actually succeeded in getting on top of the log, and thus going down with it?

This was almost incredible; yet it was possible.

If it was really the case, the lad might have been thrown off or rolled over, and his corpse would be found further down.

"Hello, Hank!" shouted Zeb Carter from the edge of the plateau. "Anything wrong down there?"

"Crawford was in the sluice when that log was turned loose, and has gone down with it!"

Without stopping an instant to await any further inquiries, the master swamper hastened to make his way down the mountain-side.

It was a rough and tough scramble, and part of the way he rolled and tumbled; but, by using his hands quite as much as his feet, he managed to control his course and keep himself right side up sufficiently for his purpose.

Every now and then he stopped at the side of the sluiceway, and looked over into the trough for the horrible sight which he expected but dreaded to see.

He did not see it, and at every stoppage his heart filled with fresh hope.

At last—as a matter of fact in a very short time—he reached the foot of the hill, and stood up to look around.

There was the big log, buried in its bed of snow and leaves and boughs; but he saw nothing of Lem Crawford.

Directly he heard something.

It was nothing less than the cheery voice of his young comrade!

"Hello, Hank! Is that you? How did you get down?"

Astonishment would not permit Hemlock Hank to reply.

"Come and help me look for the chain, Hank. It must have come down with the logs and ought to be about here somewhere."

The master swamper made his way to where his young friend was groping in the snow, and seized his hand with a hearty grip.

"Are you really alive, my boy?"

"I believe so. Don't I feel that way? All alive, Hank, and right as a trivet. A little shaken up, but no bones broken, and not much harm done. I say, Hank, it was a good thing that we got the sluice mended before that log came down."

"Are you a witch, Lem Crawford? Did you fly down, or did you really come down on that log?"

"I came by lightning express—on the log. It was a splendid ride, Hank; but—I don't believe I would care to try it again."

Luke Schooley came up just then, having returned from the river with his team, and was surprised to find those two there.

Hank Ward informed him of the facts as far as he knew them, and Lem Crawford briefly told the story of his ride.

He had had scarcely a second for thought when he was aroused to a sense of his danger; but that had been enough.

The idea flashed into his mind that his only chance was to get on the log.

As it was coming down with the smaller end foremost, it was possible that the effort might succeed.

It did succeed.

He sprung into the air as the log reached him, just as he had done when he was attacked by the moose, and alighted on his hands and knees on the top of the monster.

He dug his fingers into the bark, and succeeded in clutching a small branch that had not been trimmed off.

To that he clung with a death grip, and there was nothing else that he could do.

There was no chance to turn, and he did not even think of turning.

No thought, no skill, no strength, other than holding to that bit of a branch, could avail in the least.

His only hope could be that the log in its headlong career would not encounter any serious obstruction, or fly the track, or get any bad jolts, such as would throw him, or roll over and spill him.

For this he could but trust to Providence.

Fortunately there were no serious obstructions, and no heavy jolts.

The log was so big that it naturally kept its course in the sluiceway, and, though it swayed fearfully at times, it did not turn.

It spun down the mountain-side with a constantly increased velocity and a fearful rush and roar, but was as true to its course as an arrow to its aim.

The plunge nearly took the young man's breath away, and he could see nothing as he dashed downward so swiftly, nor could he hear anything but the terrible and incessant roar that almost split his ears.

Yet he declared that in that brief space of time he thought of a thousand things, and that it seemed to him that he was an age in making the descent.

Uppermost in his mind was the thought of what might happen to him when he got to the bottom of the hill.

Would the shock of the sudden stoppage kill him quickly?

Or would the log tumble over there and fall on him and crush him?

For that, too, he could only trust to Providence.

The result surprised him considerably.

As the big log reached the bottom it made something like an upward bound, and then plunged into the deep bed of snow and boughs.

Its rider found himself flying through the air in a cloud of snow and leaves and rubbish.

He alighted in a clump of bushes at a distance of some thirty paces from the foot of the hill, where the twigs and the snow beneath them broke his fall.

As soon as he could recover from his astonishment and realize his position, he extricated himself from the bushes, shook himself together, and discovered, greatly to his relief, that he had sustained no sort of injury.

He went direct to where the log lay, and patted it as if it were a living steed.

Then it occurred to him that the chain might have come down with the log, and he began to look for it.

"It's wonderful," said Hank Ward. "I would never have believed it, Lem, if I hadn't seen you start, and then come down and found you here."

"It's jest amazin'" exclaimed the teamster. "The like of it never happened afore, and never will ag'in. What I want to know now is, how did that log git loose?"

"I suppose the warp broke," remarked Hank.

"Mebbe it did, and mebbe it didn't. Who was workin' the warp?"

"Zeb Carter and Jotham Rollins."

"It ought to be all right, if Zeb was there; but that Jotham's a suspicious char'cter. It'll have to be looked into."

Ward and Crawford helped the teamster load the log on his bob-sled, and in so doing they found the chain, which they took on their shoulders, and made their way up the mountain by the most practicable paths.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOGGERS' LAW.

WHEN the two friends reached the plateau, they saw a sight there that surprised them.

Jotham Rollins, with his hands bound behind his back, was tied to a sapling, and Zeb Carter was seated on the remaining log, looking as if he was keeping guard over the prisoner.

He jumped up when he saw Ward and Crawford, and hastened to meet them, warmly greeting the younger of the two.

"I'm tarnation glad to see you here alive, my boy. Were you really in the sluice when that log went? How did you ever— But it's no use talkin'. Tell me all about it."

He was told all about it, and his amazement was unbounded.

"But what is Jotham doin' there, tied up?" inquired Hemlock Hank.

"I'm jest keepin' him safe," replied Carter. "If Lem Crawford had turned up dead, that scoundrel would have to swing—that's all."

"What has he been doin'?"

The master chopper related what had been taken place on the plateau.

As he was trimming his handspike he heard Hank Ward's shout, and knew that there was some disaster.

He made quick time back to the edge of the plateau, and saw that the log was gone.

At the same time his quick eye caught sight of the broken warp.

Jotham Rollins was standing at the edge, looking over.

When he had called to Hank Ward, and had got his reply, the master chopper appreciated the full extent of the disaster, whether it was accidental or not.

He had no doubt that Lem Crawford had suddenly been dashed to death and crushed under the big log.

His face was pale and set as he stepped back to the tree and examined the broken warp.

Jotham Rollins had also stepped back, and was standing near by.

Not a question did Carter put to him, but walked directly to where he stood, and looked him full in the face.

"What's the matter?" stammered Rollins, as his wavering eyes failed to meet the other's fixed and steady stare.

Without a word of reply the master chopper launched out his brawny fist, and struck him such a facer as stretched him on the ground.

Instantly Carter sprung on top of him, turned

him over, and tied his hands with thongs that he always carried.

Then he took a knife from the prisoner's pocket, transferred it to his own, and ordered him to get up.

The attack had been so unexpected and so vigorous, that Rollins had been unable to offer any opposition.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, as he complied with Carter's order. "What do you mean by this?"

"You turned that log loose, and killed a man. That's what the matter is."

"I didn't do it. The warp broke. How was I to help that?"

"I know better, Jotham Rollins. The warp was cut."

"I never cut it."

"It was cut when nobody was here but you."

Confronted by such positive declarations of his guilt, Rollins had not another word to say.

The master chopper ordered him to back up against a sapling, to which he tied him, and sat down to await news from Hank Ward.

When Lem Crawford appeared on the plateau, the prisoner cast a quick glance at him; but it would have been hard to tell from his countenance whether he was glad or sorry to see him there alive.

Carter showed the end of the warp to the two men who had come up from below.

There was a clean and fresh cut clearly visible, showing that it had been partly severed with a sharp knife before it gave way.

Hemlock Hank and his companion had brought up the other end of the warp with the chain, and there, in spite of its recent rough experience, the same cut could be seen.

Nothing more was said on the subject by those three, and Jotham Rollins had not a word to say in his own defense.

Pieces were cut from each end of the broken rope, and were carefully wrapped up and laid aside.

Then Zeb Carter, assisted by Ward and Crawford, got the remaining log off the plateau with the warp that was left, and sent it safely to the foot of the hill.

Having thus finished their task, they set out for the camp, with Jotham Rollins as their prisoner.

The rest of the crew, who had all come in, were anxiously awaiting their arrival, as Luke Schooley had already told the story of young Crawford's perilous ride on the wild log down the sluiceway.

The appearance of Jotham Rollins as a prisoner, though not entirely unexpected by some, added interest to the situation.

When the charge against him was stated, made by so solid and responsible a person as Zeb Carter, it was unanimously agreed that the man must be tried and receive the full measure of loggers' law.

The criminal maintained a dogged and moody silence, making answer to no questions or insinuations.

After supper, the trial was proceeded with there in the camp.

Seth Sloman was the presiding officer of the court, which was composed of all the members of the gang, including the witnesses, with the single exception of the accused.

Hank Ward and Lem Crawford, gave their testimony; but neither of them had any personal knowledge of the connection of Jotham Rollins with the disaster.

Zeb Carter was the principal witness, and his evidence was given with a solemnity and a particularity that showed his appreciation of its importance.

He said that while the sluiceway was being repaired he had gone off a little distance, leaving the warp in charge of Rollins.

It was then quite safe, and doubtless would have continued to be safe if it had not been tampered with.

He had instructed Jotham to call him when the sluice was ready, but had been brought back by Hank Ward's shout.

Rollins, though on the spot and cognizant of all the circumstances, had not raised the faintest cry.

Carter detailed the ensuing incidents, and exhibited the two ends of the warp that had been saved, showing the cut to all the crew.

"That rope was sound in every part when I went away," he declared, "and nobody was there to cut it but Jotham Rollins."

The accused then spoke up for the first time since he was brought into the camp.

"If that rope was cut, I never cut it. The warp snapped, and that's all I know about it. How was I to keep it from givin' way? I never touched it with a knife."

"It was a fresh cut," replied Carter. "You can see that plain enough, mates. Jotham says that he didn't cut it. Here is the knife that I took from his pocket, and I am going to open it."

He opened the knife, which was a large jack-knife with one blade, and there he found two bits of the fiber of the cut rope, which he showed to the others.

"I don't know how that stuff got there," growled Rollins. "The knife was took away from me, and I ain't responsible for it."

"Mates," said Zeb Carter, "I hain't been sworn, but I stand here all the same as if I'd taken my Bible oath. I am here to tell the truth, the hull truth, and nothin' but the truth, so help me God! I took the knife from the man's pocket, but never touched it again until I opened it here before you all."

Nobody supposed that he had; but the solemnity of his utterance was impressive.

The evidence being all in, and the accused having nothing to say for himself, there was no doubt of his guilt in the mind of any member of the court.

The only question was as to the manner of his punishment.

Concerning this there were two opinions.

Zeb Carter and Hank Ward were in favor of hanging the man, and supported their views by brief but logical and cogent arguments.

When it was objected that the court had no right to hang him, as no murder had been committed, they replied that it might as well be denied that the court had a right to inflict any punishment.

The nature of the crime, they said, lay in the intention, and there was no doubt that Jotham Rollins had deliberately attempted to commit a murder.

It was through no fault of his that he had failed, and he was just as much a murderer as if he had succeeded.

The other opinion was that which was supported by Luke Schooley and some others.

They said that it must be admitted that a logger's court was not a lawful court, though generally believed to be allowable in cases of emergency.

Its doings could only be justified, if they should be questioned elsewhere, by their intrinsic justice, and by as close a compliance as possible with the laws of the land.

In this view of the case it would be decidedly wrong to punish a man for murder when no murder had been committed.

It was the opinion of the teamster and his adherents that the proper thing would be to administer to the criminal a sound whipping, and to banish him from the camp.

Seth Sloman summed up the case in a judicial manner, though he leaned strongly to the side of the lesser punishment.

There could be no doubt, he said, that Jotham Rollins had tried to commit a murder, and that no effort of his had been lacking to complete the crime.

Indeed, it was quite likely that he had endeavored on two occasions to put an end to the life of the same man.

He was too dangerous a character to be allowed to continue in the camp, and he deserved a severe punishment; but they must be careful not to go further than a legal court might be expected to go.

In his opinion the punishment of whipping and banishment would be as much as they ought to inflict; but he would first call for a vote on the proposition that had been first submitted.

All who were in favor of the extreme penalty were requested to stand up.

Only Zeb Carter and Hemlock Hank rose, Lem Crawford voting with the majority.

So that proposition was voted down.

The second was then offered for acceptance, and it received the suffrages of the entire crew, with two exceptions.

The exceptions were the accused and his intended victim.

When sentence had been passed, Lem Crawford arose, and begged that so much of it as called for a whipping might be remitted.

For his part, he said, he was there alive and hearty, and was so well pleased at finding himself in that condition, that he had no vindictive feeling toward anybody.

It was highly probable that Jotham Rollins had tried to kill him; but the fact had not been proved beyond the possibility of a doubt.

There might have been a cut or flaw in the rope which had been overlooked, and the fibers found in Rollins's knife might have come from his pocket or from Zeb Carter's pocket.

Whatever view should be taken of these points of doubt, the young man urged that the duty of present punishment and future protection would be sufficiently served by driving the man from the camp.

If this proposition had come from any other person, it would have received no consideration at all; but, as it was put forward by the victim of the crime, it gave rise to an animated discussion.

Who had a better right than he to say what should be done?

If he favored merciful measures, why should the rest of them persist in balking his kind intentions?

He finally put an end to the debate by begging the crew, as a personal favor to him, to reduce the sentence to banishment.

This was agreed to, and the sentence was carried into effect in the morning.

Jotham Rollins left the camp without a word, silent and sulky as ever.

It did not surprise Crawford and his friends to learn, as they did within a few days, that he had been received at the Hawksley camp and given work there.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PERIL OF THE RIVER.

It was not long before Lem Crawford met Jotham Rollins again, and the manner and outcome of the meeting was quite unexpected to both.

Signs of spring were beginning to be seen and felt in many ways.

The season was nearly at an end, and soon the river might be expected to break up, and then the arduous and exciting labors of log-driving would begin.

But spring had not yet arrived, and the season had not yet closed.

A last load of supplies, intended for both the Sloman and Hawksley camps, which were about equally interested in the cargo, had come from below, but had not yet reached the camps.

In fact, it had been halted on the other side of the river, and some ten miles from the southernmost camp.

The men in charge of the freight had sent word to the loggers that if they wanted the stuff they must come and get it, as they (the freighters) did not intend to allow their horses to risk the crossing of the river at that time of the year.

This produced ill-feeling and hard words in both camps, together with threats of making the freighters pay damages when the loggers got home.

But there was no help for it, and preparations were made to go for the supplies and bring them in.

Walter Hawksley sent three men with a sled and an ox team.

The teamster was named Matthew Hayden, and Jotham Rollins was one of the men.

Seth Sloman sent a similar outfit, with Luke Schooley as teamster, and Hank Ward and Lem Crawford as his assistants.

Luke took his two young relief steers, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

"The ice is gittin' to be kinder chancy, boys," said he, "and I guess we had better go as light as we can."

When the Sloman team reached the river, they saw the Hawksley outfit crossing ahead of them.

They noticed that Hayden had brought a yoke of heavy oxen.

At least, they would have been heavy, if they had not been so poor in flesh.

They also noticed that he went straight across the river, which at that point was so wide that it might almost be called a lake, and that he seemed to pay no attention to the certainty or uncertainty of the frozen surface of the water.

"Either the ice is as stout as it ever was," said he, "or Mat Hayden is a bigger fool than I took him to be."

This was not a little to say, as Luke had small respect for the ability of the other teamster.

For his part he was not going to run any risks that could be avoided.

He chose his course carefully, and during the crossing allowed himself to be deflected from it by every indication of weakness in the ice that his experienced eye perceived.

Thus his course was somewhat serpentine, and the trip was not speedily made; but he got his team over safely.

The other party had also made a safe crossing, in spite of the lack of precautions.

When Luke and his friend reached the temporary camp of the drogers, they found Hayden and his companions quarreling with those men about the freight and the unwelcome task that had been thrust upon them.

The quarrel had already reached such a height that the freighters refused to help load the barrels and boxes on the camp-sleds.

The arrival of the other party quickly put a new face on the affair.

Hemlock Hank strode up to the leader of the drogers, and accosted him sharply.

"All that you men got to do is to keep still tongues in your heads and obey orders."

"When did you get to be our boss?" demanded the droger.

"Never mind when. That's what I am just now, and don't you forget it. Instead of makin' any more fuss, you ought to be glad that you don't get a tarnation thrashin' for fetchin' us out here, when your contract was to deliver this stuff at the camp."

"I've a big mind to take it right back as it is," replied the other.

"Try it, and your mind will be small enough to crawl into a keyhole. Jest stir a finger that way, and you won't have to wait any longer for a thrashin'."

"Do you think you can give me a thrashin'?"

"I know it. I'd take a contract to clean out the hull caravan for ten cents, and not sublet a bit of it. Jest go to work, now, with your partners, and load that stuff onto our sleds as it ought to be loaded, while west and around and boss the job."

"We want to do the fair thing."

"That's what you've got to do, and you had better set at work now, without any more talk."

The drogers reluctantly obeyed, and transferred the freight from their teams to the two sleds, while the loggers took pleasure in looking on and overseeing the work.

Good feeling was restored when this task had been completed, and the freighters and loggers separated amicably, the latter setting out to return to their camp.

Four ox teams, with heavily loaded sleds attached to them, are no light affairs to pass over ice that may be dangerous, and caution was requisite for making the trip in safety; but caution did not seem to enter into the composition of Matthew Hayden.

It would have been proper that the Sloman outfit, which was considerably the lightest should go first, to try the ice.

But Hayden was in the advance, and he insisted on keeping the lead.

From their point of departure they were to cross a cove to a point of land that reached well out into the lake-like river.

This would give them a good start toward crossing the main body of water.

Luke Schooley, instead of following in the track of the other party, chose a longer route nearer the shore.

Both teams crossed the cove safely, though the ice cracked under Matt Hayden's advance, and at times waved suggestively, signaling danger after a manner of its own.

From the head of the point of land to the other side of the broad river was the ticklish point of the programme, and both parties halted there a while before attempting the main passage.

The ice in the cove might have been expected to be heavier and firmer than elsewhere.

If it had cracked and wavered there, what might be looked for out in the stream?

"Where are you going to cross, Matt?" inquired Luke Schooley.

Hayden intimated that he meant to go straight across from the point, just as he had come to it.

"I don't want to seem to purport to teach you your business," said Luke; "but I guess you hadn't better do that."

Hayden "guessed" that there was no danger.

"But there is, and we ought all to be careful. The ice is bad enough at the best, and you must ha' weakened it in comin' over. If you'll heed my advice, you won't try to take that load across there with those big oxen."

"The cattle ain't so very heavy, Luke."

"Not so hefty as they might be if they had some flesh on their bones; but bones weigh."

"If they can't outpull your lazy and logy critters, Luke Schooley, I'll eat 'em."

"Hope you've got good teeth. Go your way, then, Matt. Suit yourself. For my part, I mean to look out for number one, which means my team and my load."

"Whoop! Come along, there!" shouted hard-headed Matt Hayden, and started to cross the river.

Schooley went a little further up, taking what he considered a safer course, and carefully looking out for indications of danger.

He also took another precaution.

As it was easy traveling, he detached his yoke of young steers, and went ahead with them, leaving the tongue oxen to draw the load.

This lessened the weight at any one point, and at the same time enabled him to test the strength of the ice.

As night was coming on, and an unexpected snowstorm had set in, Luke and his friends were clearly of the opinion that these precautions were absolutely necessary.

So the result proved.

The foremost party were hardly more than half-way across, when there came a crash and a splash, followed by cries for help.

"Matt's team is in!" shouted Luke Schooley. "Come on, boys. Let's go and help 'im."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HEAVING COALS OF FIRE.

WHEN a loaded sled, with a team of four oxen attached, breaks through the ice in a swift river, the subsequent proceedings are no joke to any of those concerned, whether men or brutes.

The brutes, indeed, generally have much the worst of it.

It was fortunate in this instance that Luke Schooley was going ahead with his yoke of young steers.

He did not have to stop to unbitch them, but hurried with them at once to the relief of the unfortunate Hayden.

Hemlock Hank and Lem Crawford also hastened to the scene of the disaster.

They found Matt Hayden standing on the shoreward edge of the ice, holding one of his head cattle by the horns, to keep the team from being carried under.

Though his carelessness or obstinacy had caused the accident, no person could be more ready or skillful than he in trying to save and extricate his oxen.

It was not the first time he had been caught in such a scrape.

One of his helpers was standing near the half-sunken sled, staring about as if completely bewildered, and wildly inquiring what had become of Jotham Rollins.

What had become of him?

It was remembered that he was on the load when the team started; but he was not there then.

As he was not visible anywhere, he must have fallen off the load, and had probably been carried under the ice.

The life of a man was of more importance than those of four oxen.

Such, at least, was Lem Crawford's belief, and he hastened to put it in practice.

His quick eye had caught sight of a break in the ice below, where the swift and shallow current had not permitted the water to freeze over.

At that dark spot under the driving snow there was a chance that the lost logger might be found.

Lem scudded down there with the wind, reaching the break before his comrades knew what he was about.

He could not afford to take time to pass around the piece of open water.

Setting his pike-pole near the edge as he ran, he fairly flew over it, alighting safely on the rough ice beyond.

Instantly he laid the pole crosswise with the river, at the lower edge of the break, and stretched himself out, ready for action.

He had got there none too soon.

A man's head came toward him, bobbing up in the rapid current.

He reached for it, and grasped the collar of a coat.

The sudden pull nearly drew him from his position; but he held on stoutly with his toes, and drew the head and shoulders out of the water.

But he could get the man no further, and the ice where he was showed signs of giving way.

He must have help.

"Hello, Hank!" he shouted. "Come here quick! Just a minute."

Hank Ward, who had discovered what his young friend was trying to do, had already started to his assistance.

He came down flying, but passed around the break, instead of vaulting across it as the younger man had done.

"Is it Jotham, Lem?" he breathlessly asked.

"Yes. Brace yourself behind me, Hank; and get hold of my legs, and pull for all you are worth!"

The master swamper quickly placed himself in the required position, and by the united exertions of the two, Jotham Rollins was drawn out of the water and to a safe place on the ice.

He was as limp as a drowned rat, and quite unconscious.

"I hope he is not dead," said Crawford.

"We will soon find out," replied Hank.

They rolled the man vigorously on the rough ice, and thumped and shook him, until a quantity of water poured from his mouth.

Then Lem took from an inner pocket of his pea jacket a flask of Medford rum, which he had provided for just such emergencies, and got a few drops down the throat of the subject.

After a further inward application of the stimulant, they had the satisfaction of seeing Rollins gasp, breathe, and finally sit up.

They soon got him on his feet, and then, after giving him a heavy dose of rum, led him back up the river to where the others were engaged in the work of extricating the oxen.

He was all ashiver from the effects of his immersion in the icy water, and his lips were blue, and his face was livid.

His teeth chattered so that he could not speak, or he might possibly have thanked his preservers.

"You must move about as lively as you can, and keep movin'," said Hemlock Hank. "Keep your blood stirrin' until yer duds kinder dry off, or you won't git back alive, arter all."

Jotham Rollins appreciated the value of this advice, to which Lem Crawford added a little more rum, and he began to run and jump about to the best of his ability, stamping with his feet, and beating himself with his hands.

As for the others, they had plenty of exercise to keep their blood moving, and the day, indeed, was not a cold one.

Luke Schooley and Matt Hayden had set at work like experienced hands to get out the unfortunate oxen.

This task, when taken hold of in the right way, and with sufficient help, was not so difficult as might be imagined.

Two men were stationed at the edge of the ice, to keep the heads of the cattle above water.

Then one of the leaders was unyoked, and a rope was passed around his horns and attached to Luke Schooley's light yoke of steers.

Hank Ward, as the strongest man in the party, was stationed at the head of this ox, to lift him as well as he could, at the same time pressing down the ice, until the knees of the beast were brought up on the surface.

Then George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were started forward, and quickly brought him out.

The same plan was adopted with the others, and within half an hour all four of them were safe.

The poor creatures were so cold and numb that vigorous exertions were required to rub them down and put life into their limbs.

Jotham Rollins was pressed into service to help at this work, which proved beneficial to him as well as to the cattle.

The task of getting out the heavy barrels that formed the greater part of the load or the sled took more time, and was rendered difficult by the growing darkness.

But it was finally accomplished successfully, and the sled was hauled out, and reloaded, and the shivering oxen were hitched to it.

Then the two parties started again, and reached the shore without any further misadventure.

It was night by that time, and a pretty dark night; but, as the road was comparatively an easy one, and the loggers knew it well, they had no doubt of their ability to reach their respective camps within a reasonable time.

They had not traveled far when Jotham Rollins dropped back from his own team, and eventually joined the Sloman party.

After a while he edged up by the side of Lem Crawford.

"May I say a few words to you, Mr. Crawford?" he asked, quite meekly and humbly.

"Of course you may," answered Lem.

Perceiving that the man wished the conversation to be private, he fell back to the rear with him.

Rollins seemed hardly to know how to begin, and made several ineffectual efforts to free his mind.

"It was you who saved my life, Mr. Crawford," he said at last.

"Yes, with the help of Hank Ward."

"But I would never have got a chance if you hadn't run down there and caught me."

"Perhaps so."

"It is queer that you should be willin' to risk your life for such a poor, God-forsaken cuss as I am."

"I could not bear that a man should die when there was a chance to save him, and you were in about as bad a fix as I was in when the log caught me in the sluiceway."

Jotham Rollins burst into tears.

"It's too much!" he sobbed. "To think that you should go and save my life arter I'd tried twice to kill you! I would never have done as much for you, and you know it."

"Well, Rollins, you and I are two different people."

"I'm different from everythin' that's decent. That's what's the matter with me. You've got me down, Mr. Crawford. Millions of money wouldn't pay me to try to hurt you ag'in. Shall I tell you who it was that put me up to those jobs?"

"No. I don't want to know any more about that than I already know or can guess at. Let it drop."

"But you will believe that I mean well now, and that I want to help you if I can!"

"I am glad to know that."

The young man perceived that he had heaped coals of fire upon his enemy's head, and was well pleased to find a friend in him at last, rather than a foe.

Having thus freed his mind, the rescued man returned to his own team, and both parties went on to their camps.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAUGHT IN A CYCLONE.

SPRING had come!

The rivers had not yet broken up, but the snows were melting and spring rains were falling, and everywhere were signs of a pleasant opening of the gay season.

The air was becoming mild and balmy, and was loaded more heavily than ever with the resinous odor of the pine and spruce trees.

Winter was over, and with it all the toils and trials of the lumbering season; but before the loggers lay a long stretch of yet more arduous occupation, attended with even greater perils—that of river-driving.

But it was joyfully welcomed by all, not only as a change and a period of incident and excitement, but because every day's journey of the southward travel would bring them nearer to their homes.

All the winter's cut of logs were in place on the river or the bank, properly marked, waiting for a start down-stream.

Any day there might come a freshet that would break up the rotten ice and send them whirling on their way.

The loggers were quietly but busily preparing for the work of the drive, and Lem Crawford, who was still regarded as a supernumerary, had plenty of time on his hands to use as he pleased.

It pleased him to use it mainly in wandering about the woods with his rifle.

In this employment he took great delight,

not only because of the game he found, but because of the opportunities it afforded him for reflection amid the influences of the opening spring in the forest.

His rambles generally took the direction of the Hawksley camp, and more than once he approached it pretty closely, but without getting a sight of sweet May Hawksley.

He could not go there to visit her, as such an attempt would do more harm than good.

Of course, his enemies would look upon him as an intruder, and would not suffer him to see her.

He knew that she was there, and that she was well and active, and with that knowledge he was obliged to be content.

Indeed, there was no chance for her to get away until the drive began, when she might be expected to accompany the loggers down the river.

One day Lem had gone out to try to get a deer, but had been unsuccessful in his search, though he encountered a bull moose which he was glad to let alone.

Indeed, he was glad that the moose, which was a dangerous animal at that season, was kind enough to refrain from meddling with him.

He had rambled far from his own camp, and on his return was making a circuit which he expected to bring him in the neighborhood of the Hawksley camp.

It was about noon when there came a noticeable change in the day, which had opened clear and bright and cool.

The sky became overcast, though from his position, surrounded by tall trees, he could see no clouds.

At the same time the air grew sultry, and every minute made it heavier, closer and more oppressive, so that a feeling of dullness overcame him, and he was so warm that the pressure of his clothing was positively unpleasant.

Was it possible that a big forest fire was burning near him; or what was the matter?

What he least expected was a thunder-storm in that latitude at that season.

But that was what occurred.

A thunder-storm with a cyclonic attachment.

The first clear intimation of the actual event was a terrific peal of thunder, which seemed to shake the very earth, and nearly deafened the young hunter.

Instantly then a hot blast swooped down, as if from the sky, with tremendous force, prostrating tall trees, and filling the forest with havoc.

Lem Crawford was fortunatly a little beyond the range of the storm-stroke, and he hastened to put himself further out of the way.

From what he deemed to be a safe position in the lee of a gigantic pine, he watched the wild work of the elements.

The scene that he witnessed amazed and bewildered him.

Hardly had the swooping storm touched the earth, when it seemed to gather to a center of irresistible energy, and went whirling toward the northeast.

Its course could be readily traced by the pillar-like cloud of smoke and snow and leaves and miscellaneous fragments of broken trees that accompanied it.

In its swift career the tall trees fell before it like grass before the mower's scythe, but in a heaped and tumbled swath, thrown together indiscriminately and irregularly, as if the storm had taken delight in arranging them fantastically.

It was all over in a few minutes.

It had come and gone so quickly that Crawford could hardly have realized that anything of the kind had happened, had it not been for the scene of destruction that was spread before his eyes.

Then came a drenching rain.

The water was not squeezed out of the clouds in drops, or gently sifted down, but came as if a gigantic dam up in the air had given way, and all its contents had dropped upon the earth at once.

It was such an avalanche of water that the hunter was glad to keep in the best shelter he could find, the lee side of the big pine, to which he clung closely.

But even then he was drenched almost as quickly as if he had jumped into the river.

In a few minutes the reservoir was exhausted, and the rain ceased.

Then the sun came out, and there sprung up a refreshing breeze, though not a cool one.

The hunter took off his clothes and wrung the water out of them before starting to continue his tramp.

He first set his compass, to make sure that he should not start in the wrong direction, the appearance of the woods about him having been greatly changed by the recent convulsion.

The first thing necessary was to cross the belt of fallen trees and broken timber, which lay directly across his route.

Though it was but a narrow belt, its beared and tangled condition made the passage somewhat difficult.

By the use of no little labor and patience Crawford succeeded in working his way through

it, and had just cleared the last obstruction, when he was startled by a cry.

It was a faint and peculiar cry.

He had heard that wildcats sometimes uttered sounds quite similar to the cries of human beings, and he involuntarily looked around for danger.

The cry was repeated, this time in a louder tone, and evidently by a human voice.

It was a cry for help.

Guided by the sound, the young man turned back to the fallen timber, and began to look for the person who had uttered it.

Again and again he was called, before he found the object of his search.

It was a man, who lay crushed under the top of a big tree, with broken branches and other debris above him.

A nearer inspection satisfied the searcher that it was Lewis Driggs.

How did he happen to be there, and for what purpose?

CHAPTER XX.

SQUEEZING OUT THE TRUTH.

WHAT Lewis Driggs had been doing there was the first point that presented itself to the consideration of Lem Crawford.

He knew that his enemy was not a hunter, either by inclination or by practice, and that he never ventured far from a camp alone.

But there he was, and near him was a broken rifle.

Crawford worked his way closer to him, removing as much of the broken timber and rubbish as he could, and took a seat on a fallen tree in front of him.

He seemed to be in no hurry to help the imprisoned man.

"Ain't you going to get me out of this?" imploringly asked Driggs. "I have been calling you a great while, it seems to me."

"How did you know I was here?" coldly replied Lem.

"I saw you before the storm struck."

"You did, hey? Then I know what you were here for. How long had you been watching me?"

"I didn't say that I was watching you."

"No; but you were. You are in a bad fix there, I judge."

"I am in a terrible fix. When the storm struck I was picked up and whirled around, and when I dropped to the ground this tree and a lot of stuff fell on top of me."

"Served you right. You had no business to be watching for a man, so that you might waylay him and shoot him down. Have you been badly hurt?"

"I can't stir, and I believe my leg is broken."

"If your neck had been broken, it would be no more than you deserve."

"How can you speak that way? Have pity on me! I will die here, unless somebody gets me out."

"There is no doubt of that, in my opinion, and nobody is likely to come here to help you, except the wolves or the wild-cats."

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Crawford? Ain't you going to help me?"

Mr. Crawford sat and drummed on the log, as if helping anybody out of a scrape was the furthest thing from his thoughts.

Lewis Driggs continued his piteous pleading.

"I will tell tell you what I will do, Driggs," said Lem at last. "I will get you out of this fix—on conditions."

"What are they. Name them. I will do anything you want me to do, if you will help me out of this, and take me home."

"There is only one condition; but it will be a pretty hard one—for you."

"What is it?"

"You will have to tell the truth."

"Is that all? I am as good as loose, then. Let me out, and I will tell you anything you want to know."

"You must answer my questions before I help you, and must tell the exact and full truth, or I will go away and leave you. I shall know whether you are lying or not. I know already that you twice hired Jotham Rollins to kill me."

Lewis Driggs groaned audibly.

"Did Jotham tell you that?" he asked.

"No—I did not need to be told."

"Are you sure that you can get me out of here? You have no ax."

"I have no ax; but I am sure that I can get you out and take you home. Will you tell me the truth?"

"Yes. What do you want to know?"

"I want to know who Walter Hawksley and May Hawksley really are."

"They are Walter Hawksley and May Hawksley," doggedly answered Driggs. "Who else should they be?"

Crawford picked up his rifle, and began to climb out of the timber. He had got but a little way off when Driggs called to him in piteous tones.

"Come back, Mr. Crawford! For pity's sake come back! I will tell you all you want to know. I will tell you the whole truth."

Crawford returned, and resumed his seat on the log.

"When you had promised to tell the truth,"

said he "and then attempted to put off on me such a gross and palpable falsehood, I gave you up as a bad job. If you try anything of the kind again, I will leave you to the wolves and the wildcats!"

"What did you mean by that question?" weakly asked Driggs.

"You know well enough what I meant. I know well enough, too, what the answer ought to be. I am only trying to find out whether it is possible for you to tell the truth under any pressure."

Driggs groaned again.

"Please hurry up," he begged, "and get me out of this."

"Give me straight answers, then. What was Walter Hawksley's name before he came to Bangor to live?"

"Charles Carinford."

"That is correct. And what was May Hawksley's name?"

"Maud Crawford."

"Just so. You are safe now. Only one more question. Is there anybody in Bangor besides yourself who can prove that?"

"No," sullenly answered Driggs.

"Yes, there is one person."

This was mere guesswork; but the random shot told.

Crawford had naturally supposed that there was at least one citizen of Bangor who would have had his suspicions, and that his Yankees curiosity would have prompted that citizen to make trouble.

"I know how to find the man," he continued; "but I don't know his name. You can help me in that. Who is he?"

"As you know so much, you may as well know all. He is Silas Bradley, who is now my uncle's partner."

"That will do. Now I will attend to your case."

The task was a difficult one; but Lem worked skillfully and manfully.

His winter's experience with the loggers had not only strengthened his muscles, but had given him an insight into the easiest modes of dealing with masses of broken timber.

By dint of lifting and prying he removed and raised the debris that had gathered over his imprisoned enemy, until he was able to pull him out from under the top of the big pine that had come so near crushing him.

Then he partly carried and partly dragged him over and through the tangled timber, until he got him safe beyond it, and under the standing trees.

He examined the leg which Driggs had declared to be broken, and discovered it to be quite sound.

With the exception of a badly sprained ankle, Driggs seemed to have sustained no personal injury.

But he was quite unable to walk, and it was necessary to devise some means of getting him to the camp.

Lem Crawford was not to be baffled by such a task as that.

With his sharp and stout bunting-knife he cut and trimmed two saplings, which he held apart by cross pieces fastened by withes.

On this framework he placed a bed of boughs, upon which he seated Lewis Driggs.

Swinging his rifle on his back, he got between the small ends of the saplings, picked them up like a pair of shafts, and trotted off as if he had been an Indian pony.

The conveyance, indeed, was similar to those used by the Indians of the Far West for transporting their personal effects.

Before starting he took occasion to utter a word of admonition to his freight.

"I might have made you promise, Driggs, before I helped you out of that scrape, to quit trying to kill me, or employing anybody else to do the job; but I am not a bit afraid of you, and I leave you free on that point."

"I will never think of hurting you again, Mr. Crawford," protested Driggs. "Whatever happens, I won't meddle with you any more. I've got enough."

The carrying machine was by no means an easy affair to drag, even over the snow, and Crawford was frequently obliged to stop and rest.

As he had several miles of distance to traverse, it was dark when he reached the Hawksley camp, and he was completely fagged out.

His arrival with the helpless man on that peculiar conveyance raised an excitement among the loggers there, and brought out Walter and May Hawksley.

The former, before he got hold of the true state of affairs, was inclined to be fractious and high-headed.

"Is it my nephew that you have got there, young man?" he demanded. "What have you been doing to him?"

"It," responded Lem. "It was not I, Mr. Hawksley. It was Providence."

"Providence be —!"

But Lewis Driggs gave a partial explanation of the affair in a sheepish way, and the master lumberman changed his tone, treating Crawford quite politely until he saw May in eager and animated conversation with him, when he

turned upon her sharply and ordered her into the house.

Crawford accepted his supper from the friendly loggers, but declined to spend the night with them, though warmly pressed to do so.

He was afraid that his own people would be uneasy about him, and was sure that he would have no difficulty in making his way home at night.

He set out without seeing Lewis Driggs again, or either of the Hawksleys, and reached his camp in good time.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I WILL FIX HIM."

WALTER HAWKSLEY had good cause for being fractious and ill-tempered, if not for considering himself a badly-used man.

There was no doubt that he and his cherished plans had lately sustained some severe reverses.

The Providence which he anathematized—or luck, or chance, or whatever anybody might be disposed to term it—had opposed itself to him invariably, if not violently.

When Jotham Rollins sought refuge in the Hawksley camp, after the failure of the scheme for sending Lem Crawford to eternity in a sluiceway, he was welcomed there and provided for.

Though the proprietor knew that his action in that matter would be the subject of unfavorable comment among his own crew, he did not hesitate.

He had the virtue of sticking to his friends, while he was implacable toward his enemies.

The sluiceway plan had been approved by him, and he attributed the escape of the intended victim not so much to Crawford's good luck as to the bad luck that attended all the projects of his nephew.

"It won't be worth while, Lew, for you to invent any more schemes," he said. "There seems to be a fatality attached to everything you undertake. Even when you really do well, which is consarnedly seldom, something happens to knock the underpinning out of your plans."

But when the news came that Jotham Rollins had been rescued from imminent peril in the icy river by young Crawford at the risk of his own life, Walter Hawksley was compelled to admit that his enemy's good-luck was yet more remarkable than his nephew's bad-luck.

That episode affected both uncle and nephew very unpleasantly.

They would much rather have preferred to hear of the death of their confederate than of his rescue by their enemy.

Might he not, in a moment of emotion, or under a sense of obligation, have revealed some of their secrets to the man who saved his life?

There was nothing he knew but the bargains that Lewis Driggs had made with him; but it was important that Crawford should not be informed of these.

As soon as possible after his return to the camp they got hold of him, and questioned him directly on that point.

Had he told Crawford anything about his arrangements with Lew Driggs, or the "accidents" that had resulted from those arrangements?

Jotham's answer was not entirely ingenuous, but was sufficiently plain to let them know how the matter stood.

"I didn't tell the young feller anything," said he. "I might have told him. I war willin' enough to tell jest then if he had wanted to know. But he didn't. He spoke about those things, and said he knew all about them that he wanted to know."

"Is that the solid truth?" asked Mr. Hawksley.

"It's the gospel truth, sir, sure as I live. And I want you to understand that I'm done workin' aginst him. You may drive me out of the camp and turn me adrift in the woods; but I don't want any more of that in mine. I've had enough."

Walter Hawksley had no thought of sending Jotham away, to go back to the other camp and furnish another ally for the enemy.

So he spoke to him kindly, and promised to care for him and protect him.

Lem Crawford had said that he knew all about certain matters that he wanted to know.

His knowledge, in their opinion, must have been something more than mere guesswork, or he would have been glad to have his belief confirmed by Jotham.

How did he get his information?

They discussed this subject earnestly, and Driggs was decidedly of the opinion that the delinquent who had furnished points to the enemy was no other than May Hawksley.

His uncle did not take kindly to this idea.

"How could May do anything of the kind?" he demanded. "She is kept close here all the while. She has not been a hundred yards from the camp since that affair with the moose. She has had no sort of a chance to meet him."

"She need not have met him," replied Driggs. "She might have written a letter and sent it to him."

"I don't believe there is a man in my employ

who would take such a letter without my permission, or that May would think of writing one. She is not that kind of a girl. Why, Lew, if May knew of that business, she would have blurted it right out, and would fairly have stormed at us. Day in and day out she would have given us no rest. No, he learned nothing from May. It was in some other way that he got his points."

"It must be his infernal luck, then."

"His luck, as you call it, is something immense and unaccountable. There is one thing certain, Lew; what the Indians call his medicine is much too strong for you, and I advise you to quit trying to work any more schemes against him."

It was quite likely that Lewis Driggs would have acted on this advice, if he had not been stirred up by jealousy.

After the rescue of Jotham Rollins, all the details of which were enthusiastically repeated and commented on by all the loggers, the conduct of May Hawksley was peculiarly exasperating.

She could scarcely find words strong enough to express her favorable opinion of the splendid behavior of the young man from New York.

She took delight in eulogizing his manly and daring act, especially in the presence of her "dad" and her cousin.

Walter Hawksley took all this coolly enough, merely saying that Crawford had done no more than the loggers were continually doing for each other, particularly during the river drive, which was packed full of perils.

May, who had listened to what the men in camp said, took those remarks for nothing more than their full value.

When she asked him why he did not invite to the camp the man who had saved the life of one of his crew, and properly express his obligations to him, Mr. Hawksley replied that he was under no obligations to the young man, who was probably too closely employed to have time for visiting.

To Lewis Driggs his cousin's eulogies and insinuations were vastly irritating.

She took pleasure in comparing Crawford's conduct with his own behavior in the affair of the moose, and he was convinced that she thoroughly understood and practiced the art of sticking verbal pins into him.

This sort of thing was so kept up, and in such an annoying fashion, that it became unendurable to him.

His jealousy and anger were raised to such a pitch that he resolved to go forth and exterminate the interloper who had made his life a misery.

He knew that Crawford was at that time in the habit of wandering about the woods in pursuit of game, and that fact gave an opportunity that ought not to be neglected.

At last he screwed his courage to the sticking point, and sallied out into the forest with his rifle, ostensibly for game, but actually to hunt Lem Crawford.

It is known how that scheme had a disastrous ending.

While the unlucky schemer was confined to the house with his sprained ankle he was at the mercy of his uncle, who taunted him with his continued failures, and declared that he was not only a born fool, but born to bad luck.

The sufferer rebelled against this treatment, and in his anger disclosed the full extent of the disaster.

"I guess that chap has got all he wants now," said he.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Hawksley.

"I guess he knows all he wants to know."

"About what?"

"About everything. About you and May, and all."

"How did he find it out?"

"I told him."

Walter Hawksley, though not usually profane, broke out in a torrent of oaths.

"You?" he exclaimed, when he had thus relieved himself. "You told him that? A while ago we were saying that he could never find out anything unless you or I told him, and it was the surest thing in the world that neither of us would ever do that. And now you have given the whole business away."

"I couldn't help it," sulkily answered Driggs. "He squeezed it out of me. I had to tell him, or stay there and die."

He then gave a piteous account of the effective means adopted by Lem Crawford for compelling him to confess the truth.

"After all, uncle Walter," said he, "I don't believe I told him anything that he didn't know already. When I tried to put him off with a lie, he dropped on me at once, and started off to leave me to the wolves and wildcats."

"Of course you told him a clumsy lie. A man who can't make an artistic lie, and stick to it through all sorts of weather, had better keep out of the business. Don't talk to me about bad luck after this. You have capped the climax. You may have the consolation of knowing that you will have nobody but yourself to blame for what you may lose hereafter."

"I do believe that I am the unluckiest man living," moaned Driggs. "But I don't mean to

meddle with that chap any more. I am like Jotham Rollins now. I've had enough."

"I am glad that you know when you have got enough, Lew, as I will not be bothered by your blundering any more. I will take the management of this matter into my own hands, and will settle it during the river drive. That is the time I have been waiting for, as it offers plenty of chances to a man of brains and a steady purpose. Whatever knowledge that fellow has gained, he must not be permitted to get away with it. But I will fix him on the river drive."

CHAPTER XXII.

CAUGHT BY A BANK JAM.

The morning after Lem Crawford returned to camp after his adventure with Lewis Driggs, found Seth Sloman's logging-crew in a state of great excitement and expectation.

The very unusual weather of the previous day had been to them a sure sign of "breaking up."

Such a storm could only be followed by the actual opening of spring which would soon bring an abundance of water for sending their logs down to the mouth of the river.

Indeed, the drenching rain, brief as it was, had already caused quite a freshet in a brook near the camp, along which a number of logs had been placed, to be sent into the river as soon as the brook should rise.

To the task of getting those logs forward all hands applied themselves vigorously, working in the ice-cold water from morning till night, until the unpleasant job was completed.

The oxen and all the personal property that would not be needed had some time previously been sent down the river in charge of Luke Schooley and two assistants, and the rest of the crew remained to take part in the labors of river driving.

Lem Crawford greatly missed his jolly friend Luke; but he had the companionship of Hemlock Hank, and there was much to delight him, besides his pleasant expectations of the excitement attending river operations.

He had finally become convinced of the truth of his suspicions concerning the identity of Walter Hawksley and May Hawksley, and had been, as he believed, supplied with the means of proving who they were.

His initiation into the perils of the river operations came early and in an unexpected manner.

The snow had melted on the sunny sides of the mountains, and the rain had fallen, and unnoticed brooks had become torrents or lakes, pouring floods of water into the river, cracking and breaking and floating away the rotten ice.

The spring freshet was at hand, and the labors of the loggers were exhaustive.

Many of the logs had been hauled out on the river early in the season, there to await the breaking up of the ice.

Numbers of others, where the bank was too steep to allow the team to drag them down, had been unloaded at its edge and tumbled toward the river.

Part of these logs had rolled out on the ice a short distance, and others as they came had lodged against them, until they were piled in masses up to the top of the bank and beyond.

When the freshet came, they were got into the river as rapidly as possible.

Occasionally there was a jam, and to clear it and get the logs fairly in motion again was a work of difficulty and danger.

Such a jam occurred where Lem Crawford was at work with Hank Ward and some others, and it proved to be an unusually stubborn case, requiring great caution, as well as the exercise of skill and strength.

It was of course necessary to start the bottom log first, as it was the key to the position, and the others could not stir until it went forward.

Hank Ward and Lem Crawford undertook the task of setting the mass in motion.

The former went to the butt end of the log, and the other to the top.

As the young man took his position, and looked up at the pile of timber above him, he realized the serious fact that when the jam should be broken, "stand from under" would be the word.

As he was obliged to work directly beneath the pile, his situation was eminently a precarious one.

The key-log was within a few feet of the surface of the rising river, where it had caught by partly imbedding itself in the mud.

To get it started they would be obliged to pry it out of this position.

Each was provided with a long and stout handspike, and they worked with a will.

But they could not budge it.

Though they tugged and toiled until the perspiration streamed from their bodies, they could not stir the obstinate log from its bed.

Zeb Carter called to Crawford from above, and offered to take his place.

"No!" exclaimed the young logger. "I can be as stubborn as this log, and I am going to start it, or drop in my tracks."

If he held to that resolve, it seemed likely that he would drop in his tracks.

Perhaps the heat and excitement of their labor, coupled with natural anger at its ill-success, made them somewhat reckless.

It is certain that Lem Crawford became careless, to say the least of it.

Placing his handspike between the bottom log and the one next to it, he pushed backward with all his strength, intent only upon the obstruction that he was trying to remove.

Either his strength was greater than he had supposed it to be, or he had overlooked some important item in the arrangement of the timber.

Instead of stirring the key-log, he gave the next one a chance to mount it.

It seized the chance with the utmost celerity, and swiftly plunged forward, followed immediately by the entire superincumbent mass.

The crash and roar as the big body of timber rushed down to the river was really terrific.

"Look out!" shouted Zeb Carter, whose watchful eyes had noticed the starting of the pile of logs.

But there was no time for anybody to act upon even the quickest word of warning.

Hemlock Hank, who had been a little more careful than his young comrade, had seen the start, and knew that there was but one course for him to pursue.

His only refuge was the river.

As quick as thought he plunged into the icy water, diving as deep as he dared, so as to avoid being struck by the heavy logs that were tumbling in at his heels.

The mass of logs, instead of rolling into the river, seemed to drop in a bunch, with a tremendous noise and splash.

There seemed to be not the faintest hope for any person who was caught beneath them.

Hemlock Hank was not so caught.

Being a splendid diver and a strong swimmer, he kept well underneath the mass of timber until he was obliged to rise to breathe.

Then he came up between the floating logs and raised himself upon them.

The water was still seething and bubbling, and the logs, which had not exhausted their momentum, were rolling wildly.

But this was nothing to the experienced logger, who stepped lightly from one to another, balancing himself like a tight-rope dancer, while he looked wistfully about for his young comrade.

Crawford was nowhere to be seen, and Hank said he made his way to the shore, where he met Zeb Carter.

The master chopper had seen the young man when he disappeared, and he briefly told the other what had become of him.

The log that started had struck Crawford's handspike so as to send the upper end whizzing in the direction of the river, and he had had no warning to cause him to loose his grasp.

When Carter last saw him, he was whirling through the air, and he dropped into the water considerably in advance of the first log that entered it.

The mass of logs speedily covered the spot where he disappeared, and since then nothing had been seen of him.

"Strange that he didn't swim out," said Hank.

"Was he a good swimmer?" asked Carter.

"From what I've heard him say, I judge that he was a first rates swimmer."

"Then he must have been struck dead."

Hemlock Hank again went out on the logs, which were quiet enough then, and walked down the river-bank, seeking in vain to catch a glimpse of his lost friend.

He saw nothing, and came back slowly and sorrowfully.

"It's no use, Hank," said Zeb Carter. "We will never see the poor lad again, unless we pick up his dead body as we go down the river."

The news of the disaster quickly spread, and the search was renewed by others, but without success.

Great was the grief among all the members of Seth Sloman's crew, and Lem Crawford, if he could have been there in spirit, would have been both pleased and surprised to learn the high estimation in which he was held by his late comrades.

Among those who heard the news were two of Walter Hawksley's men, who were in the neighborhood for the purpose of watching his logs, which were beginning to come down the river pretty freely.

They carried the news home, and the rejoicing among Lem Crawford's enemies quite equaled the grief of his friends.

"Talk about luck, my boy!" exclaimed Walter Hawksley to his nephew. "It's on our side now. As soon as you stepped out of the game, it struck just in the right place. I am really sorry for the young fellow, who had some fine points, but am not a bit the less glad that he is gone. He is out of the way now, and all our troubles are over."

But he had reason to change his tone the next day.

Hemlock Hank took another look along the bank before he went to camp.

As he passed a clump of bushes that were nearly submerged by the flood, he heard a faint cry.

Then it was a clear and familiar voice.

"Is that you, Hank?"

With a joyful shout the tall lumberman ran to the spot from which the voice proceeded.

There he saw Lem Crawford on the wet ground, under the bushes, just out of reach of the rising river.

Tears filled the eyes of the rough logger as he picked up his young friend and tenderly carried him to a better place.

Then Lem told his story.

When he was whirled into the water, he was so bewildered that it was some time before he realized what had happened.

His right arm was so badly wrenched by the fling of the handspike, that he was unable to use it.

When he dropped, he must have struck a floating log or a piece of ice, as one of his legs was severely hurt.

Consequently he was neither able to swim to the shore nor to call for help.

But he instinctively clutched the bark of the log, and held on, in a nearly unconscious condition, while the log floated away with him.

He did not know how long he remained in the water; but it must have been but a short time, as he was found not far from the scene of the disaster.

Gradually he came to his senses, and discovered that the log had drifted toward the shore and grounded in shallow water.

His limbs were so benumbed that he could scarcely move them; but he managed to crawl to the bank, and got under the bushes, where he quite lost consciousness for awhile.

When he came to himself he tried to rub some life into his chilled body, and when he was found he was hoping that he would get strong enough to make his way to his friends.

Hank Ward got help as speedily as possible, and carried him to the camp, where the joy over the return of the lost one must have warmed his heart, while a good fire warmed his body.

But the final conclusion was that he surely must have been born to be bung, as it seemed to be impossible to kill him in any other way.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAY HAWKESLEY'S PROWESS.

WHEN all the logs had been got into the river and fairly started on their way down-stream, the loggers bid farewell to their winter's camp, and set out to follow and accompany their drive.

Walter Hawksley's logs had joined those of his neighbor, and the united drives made the river lively enough.

Of course it was expected that the two crews would go down the river together, and work together at the bad places.

The most important affair in the outfit of the expedition, was the "wangun," so called from an Indian word, signifying bait or provisions.

This was a large and strong bateau, intended to carry the provisions of the crew and most of the men.

There were also a number of skiffs attached to the Sioman expedition, one of which was the private property of Lem Crawford.

The Hawkley party were similarly provided, except that she, May, had a canoe, in which she insisted upon skirmishing about the river at her own sweet will.

Crawford's skiff carried, besides its occupants, two axes, two pike-poles, a bundle of blankets, and a rubber shelter-tent.

When the expedition started, he was incapable of labor, as his arm had been badly sprained, and his leg severely bruised.

Therefore Hank Ward, who was to be his companion in the skiff, arranged a couch of the blankets, and made him as comfortable as possible.

Precious little comfort, however, was to be found in river-driving, especially by those who were actively engaged in its labors.

They were frequently immersed in the icy water, and by day and by night were always liable to be soaked by the drenching spring rains, sometimes for days having not a dry thread upon their bodies.

Their temporary night camps were comfortless, being nothing but beds of boughs in the open air, with no other protection from the weather than a big fire.

Lem Crawford, however, fared considerably better than the others, and, as he was an invalid, they did not object to his comparative luxury.

When rain fell in the daytime, he was covered with his shelter-tent, and at night it was pitched near the big fire, when he and Hemlock Hank would crawl under it and defy the weather.

So they got forward slowly but smoothly, until the first falls below the camp were reached, where more or less of trouble was to be expected.

The loggers had reason to consider themselves in good luck this time, as the logs went over the falls freely and without making any trouble for them.

But in the rapids below a pretty serious jam occurred, which seemed likely to require labor and cause delay.

Hank Ward, as one of the most experienced men of the crew, and perhaps the strongest, was obliged to go down there and assist his mates in the work of opening the jam.

Before going he attended to the interests of his young friend.

He fastened the skiff by its painter to a sapling at the shore, and arranged the blankets so that Craw-

ford could recline comfortably in the bottom of the boat.

Then he took his ax and pike-pole, and went down the river, telling his friend to take life easy during his absence.

Lem obeyed this injunction literally.

Left alone there, with nothing to do and nothing to attract his attention, he soon became drowsy.

It was a calm and tranquil spring day, sunny and almost warm, the moist air full of fragrance and languorous influences.

The gentle motion of the boat and a recent hearty dinner were also incentives to slumber.

Crawford dozed as he lay there, and finally fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

He neither saw nor heard a man with the appearance of an Indian, but in civilized attire, who came out of the woods and approached the river.

Swiftly and stealthily this man glided to the skiff, and silently unhitched the painter and let it drop into the water.

As the boat began to move away from the bank, he quietly gave it such a push as sent it well out into the current without awaking its occupant.

Then he turned away, and disappeared in the woods as noiselessly as he had come.

But there had been one witness of his wicked and murderous deed.

It was May Hawksley, who was just then coming around a bend in the river above.

She was moving slowly, dropping down with the current; only now and then dipping her paddle in the water to keep her craft headed in the right direction.

When she saw Crawford's skiff cast loose and pushed out to the river, she naturally wondered at the act, and had reason to believe that it was for no good purpose.

She stood up in her canoe, to see if the skiff was occupied.

At that distance she could not be certain, but was almost sure that she saw a man lying down there, apparently asleep.

She knew that the skiff was Crawford's, and could have no doubt that he was the slumbering man.

Instantly she dropped back to her place, and began to ply her paddle vigorously, making her light canoe fairly fly down the stream.

As she went, she uttered a shrill cry of warning.

It was her cry that awoke Crawford from his sleep, though the roaring of the rapids might well have done so.

He started up, and at once perceived the peril of his position, though he could not imagine how he had got into such a scrape.

The skiff, moving slowly at first, had been hurried forward by the swifter current as it neared the falls, until it was fairly whirled toward the roaring and tumbling water.

To go over the falls would be certain death, and what chance was there of avoiding that dreadful doom?

Hemlock Hank had taken the oars from their pins and laid them on the bank, so that his friend should not be bothered by them.

If they had been in their places, Lem could not have used them effectively, as his right arm was still lame.

Though he was not far from the shore, it was out of the question to attempt to reach it by swimming, as it was evident that in his disabled condition he could not begin to cope with the current.

There was nothing for it but to resign himself to his fate, and be whirled away to death.

Yet he permitted himself to utter an ineffectual cry for help.

"Hold on! I'm coming!" was answered in a clear and girlish voice.

He knew that May Hawksley was there in her canoe, but had not supposed that she would attempt to rescue him.

As he saw her spinning down the stream in her light canoe, a great fear came over him.

But it was fear for her, not for himself.

"Don't try it! Keep back!" he shouted at the top of his voice, waving his hand as if he could push her away.

But she came right on, as steadily as before, and yet more swiftly.

He quite forgot his own peril, tortured by an agony of apprehension for her.

Still her light craft shot toward him, until he could plainly see the set and determined expression of her pretty face.

She was within less than thirty feet of him when, by a skillful stroke of her paddle, she suddenly turned her canoe so that it lay crosswise of the current.

Instantly she stood up, a light line in a coil in her right hand.

"Catch this!" she cried, and sent the coils whirling toward the skiff.

As Lem Crawford caught the line, he saw that she had dropped back to her seat, and was paddling toward the shore as if there was the might of a man in her little arms.

He was at once aware of her intention, and perceived that it stood a good chance of success.

But he held the line lightly, lest by any chance she should be pulled back from her purpose.

She acted with great judgment, as well as consummate skill, not attempting to stem the current that was rushing like a mill-race, but sending her canoe straight across it without regard to its force in a down-stream direction.

Crawford uttered a cry of delight when he saw her reach the shore, though his skiff was then dangerously near the edge of the fall.

As soon as the canoe touched the bank she sprang out, without stopping to make it fast, and ran with her end of the line to the nearest tree.

Around the trunk of the tree she threw the line again and again with amazing quickness.

"Haul in!" she cried, almost breathlessly, and sunk at the foot of the tree, holding the end of the line.

Crawford had already passed his end, through a ringbolt at the bow of the skiff, to be ready for such action as the occasion should require.

When he saw that the other end was fast, he hauled in as well as he was able, checking the skiff just as it was about to go over.

As it was fast to the bank above, the swift current

necessarily swept it in toward the shore, and he was obliged to exert himself to the utmost as he continued to haul in the line.

Thus the skiff swung rapidly in to the shore; but its stern overhanging the fall when he took a hitch that finally brought it to a standstill.

Then he sunk down, exhausted by his efforts.

But he had strength and energy enough to catch May Hawksley's canoe when it drifted down to him, and to hold it there.

As soon as possible he made it fast to the skiff, and stepped ashore.

As he limped up the bank he met his preserver coming toward him.

She was blushing through tears until she looked like an April day.

"I have saved my life, Miss Hawksley," said he, as he bent before her.

"Have I, really? Oh, I am so glad! We are even, then, Mr. Crawford, as I owed you one for the moose."

"We can never be even, Miss Hawksley. I shall always owe you more than I can pay."

"I see that you have caught my canoe," she pleasantly replied. "How good of you! I would have been very sorry to lose it."

The cries and shouts of both had been heard at the rapids below, and Crawford was seen as he stood up in his skiff at the edge of the falls.

Hank Ward had run up there as speedily as possible, and he burst in on the couple as their conversation was becoming interesting to themselves.

Lem Crawford gave him as good an account as he could of what had happened.

"That beats all!" exclaimed Hank. "It's jest amazin', as Luke Schooley would say. Miss May, you're a startler, you are—the best trump in the pack, by all odds."

"It was touch and go with me," remarked Crawford.

"I should say it was, and that gal saved your life. But I can't guess how the skiff got loose."

He examined the painter carefully.

"The rope must ha' come untied; but I never knew a knot of mine to come untied afore."

"It did not come untied, Hank," said the girl.

"No?"

"It was untied by a man, who shoved the skiff out into the river while Mr. Crawford was asleep."

"Creation! Do you happen to know who that man was?"

"Yes. It was Indian Joe."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

LEM CRAWFORD did not soon find another opportunity of speaking to May Hawksley, much as he longed for the chance.

When Walter Hawksley learned of her last adventure, he promptly took steps to put a stop to that sort of thing.

He was vastly angry at that occurrence, by which one of his best-laid plans had been brought to naught.

Not only had his enemy's life been saved when his death seemed to be a sure thing; but May, of all persons in the world, had been the one who saved him.

Of course he could not vent his anger upon her for—at least, he could not make a point of it—but the peril of the affair was a sufficient excuse for limiting her excursions.

Though she protested that she was not at all afraid, and that she had knowledge and skill enough to keep out of danger, she was required to remain near the Hawksley wangun, where she would be constantly under the eyes of the boss or some of the crew.

Crawford, in the mean time, could cherish pleasant memories of his last meeting with her, and had the further consolation of knowing that he was rapidly recovering from the injuries he had sustained at the bank jam.

As the drive slowly moved down the stream, his leg improved so that he could walk without difficulty, and he became fairly able to use his right arm.

He was anxious to take part in the labors of the log-drivers at that difficult part of the river, but was not permitted to do so, as he was not then considered fit for the work.

Yet it was a great delight to him to go ashore and stretch his limbs, and he passed a considerable part of his time on the bank and in the woods.

For the expedition down the river one of the crew was detailed as cook, and another as his assistant.

It was their custom, after the two o'clock meal, which was quite regularly prepared and served, to run the wangun down the river, in case the logs were going forward smoothly and well, as far as it was thought the drive would reach by night, and there to make the camp.

One afternoon, when the sun was getting low in the west, Lem Crawford determined to go ashore and walk down to the wangun and the nightly camp, leaving Hemlock Hank in the skiff to follow the logs with the rest of the crew.

He did not take his rifle, as he was not intending to look for game, but merely to enjoy the tramp.

Very pleasant he found it, walking in the woods amid the wholesome resinous odors of pine and spruce and hemlock, with the early spring birds singing about him, and

The Indian, though usually on the alert, had not seen the young white man; but he turned sharply enough when Lem started toward him.

"Hold on, there!" shouted Crawford, as the other seemed uncertain whether to stop or to run.

"Hold on, I say! I want to speak to you."

The Indian decided to halt.

He had no reason to suspect that his stealthy act had been observed, and why should he fly from the white man?

But Crawford quickly undeceived him on that point.

"I want to know," he demanded, "why you turned my boat loose to go over the falls."

This meant war, and Joe showed that he was prepared for war, by brandishing a stout stick.

His attempt to cut short the career of the young man from New York had failed, through no fault of his own; but here another opportunity presented itself, and he seized it.

"Joe kill you—skunk!" he cried, as he sprung toward his questioner.

The glare of his beady black eyes, and the fierce expression of his dark face, told that he meant mischief.

But Lem Crawford meant business, and was confident of his own powers, in spite of his partially disabled condition.

His left arm, at least, was quite sound, and he knew how to use it.

As the Indian rushed upon him, aiming a blow with the stick, Lem grasped it with his left hand, and wrenched it from him by a dexterous twist.

Joe instantly drew a knife, and ran in to fight at close quarters.

He was so quick that the white man could not prevent him from closing, and the captured stick was useless.

Lem dropped it, and seized with his left hand that held the knife.

Then ensued a sharp struggle, one striving to cut, and the other to get possession of the knife.

The two men as they stood were pretty well matched, the lameness of Crawford's right arm losing him the advantage which his superior weight and skill might have given him.

Joe was unable to disengage his right hand from the grasp of his antagonist; but the left was free, and he proceeded to use it as well as he knew how.

He had no idea of boxing, but at clutching and wrestling was quite an adept.

He seized the white man around the neck, and tripped him quickly with his left foot, at the same time throwing the weight of his body forward.

Crawford lost his balance, and fell backward to the ground, the Indian on top.

In falling he released the knife hand, giving his adversary a double advantage.

But it was not maintained long enough to be made effective.

The under dog in the fight, realizing the peril of his position, put forth all his strength and skill, and threw the other off.

Instantly they were on their feet, glaring at each other almost breathlessly.

Joe doubtless realized the fact that the contract he had undertaken was heavier than he had expected it to be; but he was not yet ready to abandon it.

He still had the knife, and evidently meant to use it.

As for Crawford, though the stick with which Joe had begun the combat lay near him, he did not dare to stoop to pick it up, as the first movement in that direction would be sure to bring the Indian down upon him.

Joe came speedily enough.

As soon as he got his breath he dashed at the white man again.

Again Crawford seized the knife-arm with his left hand, giving it a severe wrench.

At the same time he struck his adversary in the face with his right fist, putting all his force into the blow.

The effort probably hurt him as much as it hurt the other; but the Indian staggered backward, surprised by the two-handed attack.

In his confusion he dropped his knife, which Lem picked up before he could recover himself.

Perceiving that he had lost an advantage which he could not hope to regain, he threw up the contract, turning and running at the top of his speed.

As he ran like the wind, Crawford made no attempt to pursue him, but watched him as he disappeared in the shades of the forest.

Then he continued his journey in search of the wangun, carrying the knife which was the only trophy of his partial victory.

When he reached the night camp, he found the crew at supper, and Hemlock Hank among them, wondering why his comrade had not come in.

Crawford gave no explanations until the meal was over, when he took his friend aside, and told him of his encounter with Indian Joe.

"The darned skunk!" exclaimed Hank. "So he tried to kill you ag'in. What sort of a grudge has he got ag'inst you, anyhow?"

"None tha' I know of," answered Lem. "I am sure that he can have no grudge of his own against me. I have seen the man before, but never spoke to him."

"Somebody else's grudge, then? Do you think that somebody else put him up to those tricks?"

"Yes."

"Who was it, Lem?"

"Walter Hawksley."

"Creation! You don't mean to say that, now? If you had said Lew Driggs—"

"Those two are one in this matter, Hank."

"Mebbe they are. Yes, that reminds me of his trick with your letter at Bill Stansill's place. Injun Joe about belongs to him, too. Yes, boy, I guess you're right. The next time I meet Hawksley, I'll— I'll choke him."

"No Hank; that would not suit me at all. I don't want you to do that. What I have said to you is a secret between you and me, which mustn't go any further. Sometime I will tell you more about it."

"All right, pardner. But there's Injun Joe, I hope you don't object to my checkin' him."

"No."

"Then he's my meat. If I ever come across him ag'in, and I'm likely to, I'll grab him with a grip that'll squeeze Hail Columby out of him."

"And bring him to justice, Hank!"

"Jest so. Bring him to justice, or bring justice to him."

CHAPTER XXV.

JUSTICE TO INDIAN JOE.

It was not long before Hemlock Hank got sight of Indian Joe, and had a chance to put his threat in execution.

The opportunity arrived the day after Lem Crawford's encounter with the ex-mail-carrier.

Before noon on that day, as the loggers went down the river, they discovered that the logs had begun to form a jam at an unexpected spot.

This was at a falls at a narrow part of the river, which they supposed the drive would pass without difficulty, the water being so high at the time.

The fall stretched quite across the stream in a straight line, but was a small affair, the drop being scarcely more than three feet, though the rapids below were swift, uncertain and dangerous.

It was not in the rapids that the trouble began, though it might have been looked for there, if anywhere.

A perverse and unregenerate log had caught on a point of rock in the middle of the stream, right at the edge of the fall, and there it stuck.

There was no sufficient reason why it should do so, as it might as well have veered to one side or the other and gone on; but it chose to stick on that point of rock, doubtless with the deliberate design of worrying its human attendants.

Its bad example was immediately and extensively imitated.

Other logs gathered about it and clung to it, until there was a formidable jam at that point, reaching from shore to shore, and for a considerable distance up into the broader part of the stream.

As soon as the loggers were aware of this obstruction they hastened to the scene, to endeavor to start the sticks on their course before the jam should become a serious one.

In this they were unsuccessful.

The log in the middle of the stream, which afterward became the key-log of the position, was so situated that they could not get at it from the shore, and the bridge of logs had not yet formed sufficiently to enable them to go out and work on it.

By taking a boat below, they fastened a rope to an end of the refractory stick, which they carried to the shore further down, and endeavored to unlock the obstruction by pulling.

But by that time the key-log had become so tightly wedged in its place by the masses of timber that pulled on it from above, that it could not be budged.

Speedily the logs that were swiftly coming down the stream, arrested by the obstruction, collected in a solid and seemingly impenetrable mass, thus forming a raft upon which the river could easily be crossed.

The current, temporarily dammed and backed up by this collection of timber, pressed against it with tremendous force, roaring and surging and foaming as it pushed its way under and over and through the barrier.

Experienced loggers realized the fact that if in their labors they should hit upon the weak point of the jam, or if it should accidentally give way from some cause unknown to them, there could be no hope of the safety of a man who should be working upon it.

But in spite of the danger, they went on the logs, and labored as coolly and unconcernedly as if they were on solid ground.

One man from each side, with ropes around their waists that were held by their comrades on the shore, walked over to the middle of the stream and bravely attacked the jam.

Their efforts produced no perceptible effect, and when the crews quit for the two o'clock meal, it was admitted that it would be necessary to try some more elaborate plan for starting the logs.

The last of the Sloman crew to leave the scene for the dinner-camp were Hank Ward, Zeb Carter and Lem Crawford.

They had got but a little distance from the jam when Hemlock Hank, hearing a noise behind them, turned and looked back.

The other two followed his example.

It was a man who had made the noise, and not one of their own crew.

He had just issued from the woods, and was making for the jam, evidently with the intention of crossing on it to what was known as the Hawksley side of the river.

He was at once recognized by the three men as Indian Joe, who had probably been waiting about there since his encounter with Crawford for a chance to rejoin those who were supposed to be his friends across the river.

Hemlock Hank was instantly exasperated at the sight of the would-be assassin.

"That darned skunk!" he exclaimed. "I'll ketch him now, Lem, and bring justice right down on top of him."

"Never mind him, Hank," said Crawford. "Let the rascal go."

But the tall lumberman had already started in pursuit, and was not to be stopped.

Indian Joe had reached the bank of the river when he was discovered, and the halt of the three white men caused him to quicken his movements.

He jumped down upon the nearest log, and started to cross the bridge of rough timber, having a good start of his pursuer.

If Hemlock Hank was to catch him it would be necessary to overtake him before he got away from the jam, as he was notoriously a swift and tireless runner.

Once on the other shore, he could soon put himself beyond the reach of pursuit.

But Hemlock Hank was decidedly his superior in everything that pertained to lumbering, and had few equals in the art of traversing solid or loose masses of timber.

As soon as he jumped down on the jam he began to gain on the Indian pretty rapidly, and his friends on the shore became sanguine of his ability to apprehend the fugitive.

In fact, when the Indian had scarcely reached the middle of the river, Hank Ward was close behind him, and his exultant shout proclaimed his certainty of success.

But there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.

Just then an immense and unexpected slip occurred.

It was nothing less than the sudden starting of the jam, producing an entire and terrible change of scene.

The water that was banked up against the tangled mass of timber pressed upon it with a constantly increasing force, and other logs were continually coming down and striking the jam with an impetus that was not to be despised.

The pressure had become so great that something had to give away.

What gave way was the key log, the perverse and unregenerate stick of timber that had made all the trouble, and its fate was doubtless well deserved.

At the middle it was held by the point of rock on which it had been caught, and which would not give way.

Its two ends, pushed forward by the vast weight of wood and water above, made the pressure at the bearing point too heavy to be borne, and it gave way.

Suddenly the great log snapped in the middle, apparently as easily as if it had been a dry twig, but with a report that could be heard a long distance.

Zeb Carter, than whom no man in the logging business had a quicker or more watchful eye, saw what was to happen just before the log broke.

"Come back, Hank!" he yelled at the top of his voice.

His words were drowned by the report and the roar that immediately followed it.

Even if they had reached the ear of his comrade, they could have been of no avail.

Hemlock Hank, hot in pursuit of Indian Joe, had nearly laid his hand on the fugitive's shoulder, when that report, loud and sudden as the discharge of a cannon, stopped the motions of his body, and almost stopped the beating of his heart.

He knew at once what had happened and what was to happen.

Instantly, with a terrible crashing and grinding, and with a roar that could be heard at the distance of at least a mile, the entire mass of logs precipitated themselves into the rapid.

The force behind them, suddenly unspent, drove them forward with a momentum that quite precluded the possibility of any further jam.

Loggers from both sides of the river, roused by the noise, knew that the jam had broken, and hurried to the scene.

It would have been to all of them an occasion for great rejoicing, and for manifestations of extravagant delight, had it not speedily become known among them that a catastrophe was mingled with the event—that two men were caught in the jam.

Yet they were not near enough to the scene to take note of the fate of the two men.

That exciting but mournful spectacle was reserved for Zeb Carter and Lem Crawford, who were watching their comrade with painful intensity when the jam broke.

As for Hemlock Hank, he was in the full possession of all his bodily and mental powers; but what could he do?

In all human probability there was nothing before him but death, certain and quick.

He had not to wait a second to be notified of the inevitable.

As the great mass of logs rushed down into the rapids they were piled together in a most extraordinary manner and the most extravagant shapes.

The logs were thrown and whirled about as if they had been a handful of jackstraws, some standing on end, others thrown up into the air clear of the rush, and others breaking like pipe-stems as they crashed together.

Over they went in a wild whirl, and Hemlock Hank and Indian Joe went over with them.

Lem Crawford covered his eyes with his hands, unwilling to gaze upon the fearful fate of his friend.

But an exclamation from Zeb Carter, who was watching the scene intently, caused him to look up.

To his surprise and delight he saw Hank Ward standing up and struggling to reach the shore.

The logs were dashing and tumbling about in the lower rapids; but Hank had kept his footing, and was stepping or springing from one to another as he saw his chance.

Now and then he would dodge a big stick that seemed to be hurled directly at him, or would stoop under another, or would leap over another.

Though his motions were as quick as those of a cat, and his long body seemed to be as lithe as that of a serpent, it did not appear to be possible for him or any other man to escape the constantly changing perils that surrounded and confronted him.

If he should fail for an instant to maintain his footing, there would be no more hope for him.

Yet every second was a great gain, as he was working his way toward the shore, and at the same time was being borne down to smoother water.

When the logs reached the quiet current of the river below the rapids, the violence of their rush was exhausted, and they bobbed along gently enough.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FISHING EXCURSION.

The conversion of Jotham Rollins proved to be more thorough than it might have been expected to be, considering the stubborn and uncompromising character of the man.

After his ignominious expulsion from the Sloman camp he was protected and supported by Walter Hawksley, whose money he had previously received; yet he was by no means disposed to be loyal to his employer and protector.

Perhaps he was naturally disgusted with the signal failure of his former atrocious acts, which had so justly earned for him the contempt and detestation of his fellows in both camps.

Doubtless, too, the unselfish heroism of Lem Crawford in rescuing him from a watery grave had much to do with his change of heart.

As for Walter Hawksley and Lewis Driggs, they paid no attention to him whatever, and had as little to do with him as possible.

He was a tool that would no longer serve their purposes, and they cast him aside as useless.

In the camp he had no friends.

Every man, in fact, was his enemy, to the extent of thoroughly despising him and seeking to avoid his companionship.

There was but one person who would condescend to associate with him, and that person, strange as it may seem, was pretty May Hawksley.

He had gained her countenance, if not her friendship, by what he was able to tell her concerning Lem Crawford.

Jotham had easily been able to perceive that Crawford was strongly inclined to admire the fair girl, and could guess at what he did not actually know.

When he told her of the young man's daring and prowess and popularity, and observed how eagerly she listened to every detail connected with the New Yorker, he formed a pretty sound judgment with regard to the state of her feelings.

Occasionally he gave her rather plain hints of the hatred that both Lewis Driggs and Walter Hawksley entertained for the stranger, and his hints engendered suspicions in the mind of May.

Her suspicions were confirmed by a bit of conversation which she casually overheard between her "dad" and her cousin, directly after she had saved young Crawford from his peril in the skiff.

She heard enough to give her to understand that they were greatly chagrined by his escape on that occasion, and that Indian Joe had their full sympathy.

If the assassin had their sympathy, it was natural for her to suspect that he had previously had something more than sympathy.

Horrified by this discovery, she said nothing about it, but thereafter treated Walter Hawksley with a coldness that was unaccountable to him.

These hints and suspicions and revelations drew her more closely to Jotham Rollins, who did not then hesitate to assure her that he meant well toward Crawford.

Walter Hawksley did not object to her intimacy with the man he harbored.

As none of the crew would work with Rollins, he was of little use on the drive; but it was not doubted that he might be trusted to watch May and take care of her, thereby relieving the master lumberman of some trouble and anxiety.

In that very point Jotham's disloyalty came into play.

The drive had just passed a mountainous region below which the river spread out over flat lands covering a wide space of forest and meadow.

Here the logs ran out into the shoal water on both sides of the river, grounding there so constantly and persistently, that both crews were expected to be occupied at least a day or two in getting them all out of trouble.

From the mountains came clear and beautiful brooks, which were not only charming objects in themselves, but abounded in trout.

Jotham Rollins proposed to May a fishing excursion to pass the time.

She gladly assented to the proposition, and easily obtained permission to go, as Jotham was to be her guide and protector.

The time and place having been settled, he took pains to communicate with Lem Crawford, telling him when and where, if he chose, he might meet May Hawksley.

Lem naturally did ch... and was so grateful for the intimation, that all his ill-feeling toward Rollins was at once wiped out.

He got a little fishing-tackle together, and was put ashore by Hank Ward on the Hawksley side of the river.

He easily found the stream to which he had been directed by Jotham Rollins, and wandered along its rocky but shaded bank, occasionally dropping his line into the water, but hardly making any show of attending to his duties as an angler.

He was fishing, but not for trout.

Fishing for pretty May Hawksley.

He got pretty well up into the mountain before he found her.

Then he came upon her suddenly, in a most charming and romantic spot.

In a sort of glen, between two high walls of rock, and just at the foot of a lovely little waterfall, was a dark pool of quiet water, such as the trout loved to patronize.

There was May Hawksley, sweet enough to charm all the fish in the brook, seated on a narrow shelf of rock, fishing in the pool.

Jotham Rollins was standing near her, and both had been angling to some purpose, as was proved by several fine trout that were in view.

She blushed brightly when Lem Crawford came on the scene, and rose to greet him.

"Who would ever have thought of seeing you here?" she exclaimed. "This is a most unexpected meeting."

"It is very fortunate for me," he answered, "that I happened to choose this day and this brook for my fishing, as I have the great pleasure of finding you here."

"Have you been fishing, Mr. Crawford?"

"That is what I am here for."

"But you have caught nothing. See how lucky we have been already."

"I had not yet reached the lucky spot, and I must

confess that I saw so many pretty sights down the brook, that I loitered along to admire them, though there was nothing so lovely as what I find here."

This was pointed, and May could not help perceiving the point.

"There is great fishing here," she said with a blush.

Jotham Rollins was evidently one too many, and he knew it.

"We passed a pool below here that ought to hold some fine trout," said he; "but I thought we would try this place. I didn't want to worry you to go down there, Miss May, as you seemed to be satisfied here. But Mr. Crawford is here to look after you now, and, if you will let me, I would like to step down there and try my luck."

May had no objection to make, and merely suggested that he should not go far away.

So they were left alone, and after that no more fish were caught at that pool.

Crawford was justified in coming to the conclusion that Jotham Rollins was an angel, though he had therefore been so darkly disguised.

They had so much to say to each other that it was no wonder that the fish were not molested.

Lem was of the opinion that he had not sufficiently expressed his appreciation of her skill and daring in saving his life, but May made light of that matter, as she had something on her mind which she considered of greater importance.

That was the hints and revelations she had lately received concerning the feeling of Walter Hawksley and Lewis Driggs toward him.

Lem endeavored to treat this as lightly as she had treated the other matter, but she insisted upon it, and declared that she had heard both of them expressing their regret that Crawford had not perished when Indian Joe turned his skiff loose.

The young man tried to pass it over without censoring Mr. Hawksley.

"As for your cousin," he said, "I know that he hates me, and it is quite natural that his uncle should sympathize with him. But I doubt if Driggs is inclined to worry me any more."

"Who was it, then, that set Indian Joe on to kill you?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it was an idea of his own."

"Why does my cousin Lew hate you?"

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, what is that, Mr. Crawford?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PERIL OF A FLOOD.

Clouds had been gathering in the sky while May Hawksley and Lem Crawford were talking.

The clouds had come up quickly, and had been entirely unnoticed by those two as they sat at the quiet pool under the shadow of the rocks.

At that point they were not heavy or ominous, scarcely obscuring the sky.

But further up, and about the summit of the mountain, out of sight of the young people they were thick, black, and more than threatening.

The pleasant pool, indeed, was just outside the edge of the storm that was brewing.

What had startled May Hawksley was a peal of thunder.

It startled her companion, too; but he looked up at the sky, and his countenance became serene as he noted the direction of the scudding cloud-drift.

His experience in the Adirondacks and in the forests of Maine had caused him to consider himself quite a weatherwise young man.

"It don't amount to anything," he said in answer to May's exclamation. "There is a storm somewhere—or there is going to be a storm—but it is not at all likely to touch us. The thunder is distant, as you may perceive, and the clouds are not coming in this direction."

Reassured by his confident tone, May pressed the question which she had asked him.

"Why is it that my cousin Lew hates you?"

"I am not sure that I know," answered Lem, "but I can guess."

"Give me your guess, then."

This was a little embarrassing to Lem Crawford, but it seemed likely to lead up to something he wanted to say.

That something ought to be said at the earliest opportunity, and what better chance would he have than was then offered to him?

"I am inclined to believe," said he, "that your cousin is jealous."

"Jealous?" she exclaimed. "How should he be jealous? Of what? Of whom?"

"I understand that he wants to marry you, and that his uncle favors his suit. It is natural that he should be jealous of every young man who comes near you."

"But no young man comes near me. I never see anybody, except those at the camp, and they are not what you might call young men."

"You have seen me now and then," suggested Lem.

"Yes, but so seldom. Do you really believe that he is jealous of you?"

"I do, and I know very well that he has cause to be."

This statement was so much to the point, that May turned her head aside, and did not venture to ask why Driggs had cause to be jealous.

"He is jealous of me," continued Lem, "because he believes that I love you, and I can excuse him, because he is right in that belief."

Then the young man opened the flood-gates of his eloquence, and it poured forth like a jam of logs that has been broken on a booming river.

He told May that he had admired and loved her since he first met her at the time of the episode of the "Indian devil," that his love had grown and increased until it had become unconquerable and he had no desire to conquer it; that it was beyond his powers of expression to picture the quality and extent of his love, and that existence would be untenable to him unless she should return it.

In fact, he told "the same old story," but told it with such warmth and earnestness that she trembled while she blushed.

She had another cause for trembling just then.

A louder and sharper peal of thunder than they had yet heard came rolling down the mountain-side, and the frightened girl shrunk closer to her companion.

"It won't come near us," he said. "The storm must be far away. See! the sky is almost clear above us."

Yet the storm had already gathered and burst about the summit of the mountain, and was pouring down its rugged sides such an avalanche of rain as was sure to make trouble somewhere.

"Do you believe that I love you?" asked Lem, as the girl's fright gave him an excuse for sheltering her with his arm.

"I do," she timidly answered, "and I am very glad to believe it."

"But do you—"

"Oh, yes. Say nothing more. I am very fond of you, and shall never care for anybody else. But I am afraid that it is all very sad. I cannot see my way clearly. I am so sorry that my father has taken such a dislike to you, and I wonder if he will ever get over it."

"Leave that to me, dearest. Say nothing to him or any one else until you reach your home, and then leave me to say what ought to be said. Will you trust it all to me?"

"I will. But what is that fearful noise? I have heard it before at a distance; but now it is so near."

What she spoke of was a dull, hollow roaring, that had been sounding in the ears of both for some time, and that might well have been taken for the distant storm.

But it had rapidly approached and increased until its volume and proximity were really terrifying.

Then it burst upon them suddenly, and its cause and effect were at once apparent.

The storm that broke on the mountain had poured down such an amount of rain that in a very short space of time the brook had swollen to a torrent, and the torrent had reached the pleasant pool.

In an instant the picturesque waterfall became a cataract, and down dropped a perfect wall of water, such as threatened to sweep everything before it.

Quickly the quiet pool was a surging, foaming mass of muddy liquid, filled with sticks and logs and boulders that were shot forward by its uncontrollable rush.

May turned to run down the glen; but her companion seized and held her.

"Stop!" he commanded, in a tone of authority.

"There is no use in that. The flood can run faster than we can. Stand right where you are. Now give me your shawl."

His quick perception, aided by coolness and presence of mind, had pointed out the only possible means of escape.

He tied the shawl pretty tightly about her body, and knotted the ends firmly.

"Are you going to leave me?" she asked imploringly, as he turned away.

"Not a bit of it. Come closer to the rock."

He had noticed a ledge a little higher than his head, and in a very few moments he climbed to it.

"Quick!" cried May, as the water surged up around her feet.

The young man prostrated himself on the ledge, reached down his hands, and grasped the knotted shawl, drawing her up by main strength.

She aided the operation to the best of her ability by grasping the points of rock with her hands, and inserting her feet in the crevices.

Thus he was able to place her on the ledge at his side.

"Now we are safe!" she joyfully exclaimed, as he raised her to her feet.

Safe? They were far from safe, as she quickly perceived.

The avalanche of water, covered with debris from the mountain-side, had poured into the glen until it had risen above the waterfall, which was entirely obliterated by it, and it was still rising rapidly.

Up the rocky wall it had mounted until it was then near the ledge on which the escaping couple had sought refuge.

They had no time to lose in getting out of the way of its fierce assault.

Fortunately there was another ledge above them and near the top of the rock.

Lem Crawford hastily climbed to it, and drew up his companion as he had done before, just in time to escape being swept away.

From this position, which was really safe, they looked down with wonder and awe on the flood below, which swept through the glen in a torrent, with a resistless rush and a terrific roar.

From this position, too, they easily clambered to the mountain-side, where they sat down to rest after their exertions.

"I am afraid for Jotham Rollins," said May. "I hope he has not been caught by that fearful flood."

"No danger of that, I think," answered Lem.

"There is no place

As for Lem Crawford, he gave no account of the occurrence to any person but Hemlock Hank, who was his confidant and bosom companion during the drive.

As Hank was under a strict injunction of secrecy, it was not likely that the episode would come to the ears of Walter Hawksley.

Yet he and Lewis Driggs had their own ideas about the peril of that freshet, and one result of their meditations was that May was no longer allowed to go abroad in the company of Jotham Rollins.

A close watch, also, was kept upon her when she was in her canoe, so that she could get no opportunity to meet or communicate with Lem Crawford.

But a change had come over the girl, which her supposed relations did not fail to notice and comment upon.

After the fishing excursion it was evident that she had something on her mind that she was keeping from them.

She was reserved, absorbed in her own meditations, and seemed to take little interest in her former sports and employments.

At the same time, though she appeared to be happy and contented within herself, she manifested an increasing aversion for her alleged cousin, and a growing coldness toward her supposed father.

In this she considered herself fully justified.

She was sure that one of them had sought to cause the death of him she loved, and she had more than a suspicion of the other.

Walter Hawksley, who had in vain endeavored to persuade her to give up her secret, consulted Lewis Driggs on the subject.

"She has fallen in love with that Crawford fellow," said the young man.

"How can that be? She never sees him, unless at a distance, and she has had no chance of meeting him."

"That is what the matter is, though. You ought to be able to see that she is in love with somebody. She don't fancy me, and he is the only other young man about here."

"But she can't suppose that he cares for her. There is nothing to show for that."

"How can he help caring for her? As for meeting her, he has met her too often already. Of course he cares for her. I could see that easily enough, and you may bet your sweet life that she has been quick to find it out. Girls always are."

"That sort of thing must be put a stop to," said Walter Hawksley, as he frowned gloomily.

"Easy enough to say that; but how is it to be done? You can't send May home. If you could, he would follow her. That fellow's luck is something wonderful. You said that you were going to fix him on the drive; but he is here, alive and flourishing."

"We are not done with the drive yet, Lew."

It was quite true that they were not done with the drive.

Indeed, it lacked a great deal of being ended.

The loggers had come to a very difficult part of the river, where their labors and dangers were likely to be greater than ever.

Below the stretch of overflowed lands where they had so much trouble with logs that went ashore occurred a series of rapids that were always dreaded by river drivers.

The first of these rapids was especially obnoxious, not because it had a steep fall, but because of its length and swiftness, and because the channel was obstructed by hidden rocks, as well as by those that were in sight.

At this bad place a double jam had formed.

Perhaps it would be more exact to say that there were two separate jams.

One was at the upper edge of the rapids, and the other near the lower edge, about a hundred yards away.

Neither of the jams seemed at first to be very formidable.

The first mentioned covered only half the river, reaching from the shore on the Hawksley side to the middle of the channel.

The other was a series of small jams, reaching quite across the river, no one of them of much account in itself, but all growing pretty rapidly by the addition of logs that were constantly coming down through the clear space above.

On the lower jam the loggers had begun work as soon as possible after it was discovered, hoping to clear it away so as to leave the river open for the movement of the upper jam when it could be started.

But the task was more intricate and difficult than they had expected it to be, and they established on the shores below the rapids camps which they might occupy for several days, if not for a week or two, such being the vicissitudes and delays of the river driving.

One of the details of the business that required the greatest skill, and was liable to the greatest perils, was that which was known as "running the wangun."

At most of the falls and swift rapids the crew could make the portage by land, and could carry most, if not all, of the tools and provisions; but the heavy bateau that was styled the wangun had to go by water, no matter what might be the dangers of the trip.

It was necessary that both the wanguns should go down the rapids where the double jam occurred, in order to reach the camps below, and that of the Sloman crew was the first to make the venture.

It was lightened as much as possible, and the two best men of the crew were detailed to manage it.

These were Pete White, commonly known as Big Pete, who was regarded as a master at the art of "running the wangun," and Hemlock Hank, who was as strong as an ox and skillful at everything.

Just then the undertaking was more than usually difficult, as the jam formed a partial dam, that forced the water into the clear space, causing it to run like a mill-race of the largest dimensions, and at the same time covering the rocks that were to be feared.

If it had been straight like a mill-race, the issue of the attempt would have been more certain; but nobody could calculate on the whirling and twisting current.

The risks of the venture were understood and appreciated by the two strong and brave men who were to run the wangun; but they did not for an instant hesitate to undertake the task.

They shoved out from the shore above, Big Pete at the bow with a pole, and Hemlock Hank at the stern with a steering-oar.

As they passed from the quiet water into the boiling and surging rush of the rapids, their progress was intently watched by all on shore, and especially by Hawksley's men, the starting of whose bateau was to depend on the issue of this experiment.

Big Pete at the bow was to give the steersman at the stern the best directions he could give for controlling the course of the clumsy craft, and at the same time to use his pole in endeavoring to avoid such dangers as were visible.

The truth was, however, and they knew it right well, that neither the setting-pole nor the steering-oar, nor yet the best of their strength and skill, would be of much avail when the bateau should get fairly in the whirling rush of the rapids.

She must take her chances there, and they must take their chances with her.

Over she went like a flash, and immediately was tossed about in the raging flood as if she were no better than a chip.

Lem Crawford had run the rapids, and had made the trip successfully in his skiff, though she was nearly full of water when she reached the end of the run.

It may have been his customary good luck, or perhaps the lightness of the skiff, that carried him through safely, as his efforts to control the course of the craft amounted to little.

Anyhow, there he was, with a clean skiff in the still water below the rapids, watching the descent of the others, and hoping that he might be able to assist them in case of accident.

It was doubtless his success that had encouraged them in their attempt, and had determined the course which they endeavored to take.

They kept the course well at the outset of their run.

At least, they started in the right direction, and the bateau seemed inclined to keep it.

She was bounced and twisted about as lightly as Crawford's skiff had been, but kept herself right side up, and promised to make the run safely.

But there came a sudden stoppage of her promising career.

At about the middle of the series of rapids was a bit of an interval—a sort of a shelf of comparatively still water.

The torrent ran quite as swiftly there as elsewhere, though it did not seem to do so, and its quiet was delusive, because it concealed an eddy that amounted to a whirlpool.

Into this pool the bateau bounded, and was instantly seized and turned about like a feather in a gale of wind.

Fearing that she would start to descend the next step of the rapids broadside to the current, the two strong men made vigorous efforts to get her straightened out.

Big Pete with his setting pole, and Hemlock Hank with his steering-oar, exerted themselves to the utmost, with as good judgment as the circumstances would allow.

But that was not the real danger.

The greatest peril was one which they did not see, and which it was impossible to guard against.

While it was broadside to the current the bateau was swept against the sharp point of a hidden rock, and there it stuck.

Instantly the mass of water from above piled against it and pressed upon it, suddenly lifting the upper side of the heavy craft.

At the same time a log came bounding down the rapids, and struck one end of the wangun.

Its conductors had not been afraid of the logs that might be expected to follow them, because they had no doubt that they would outrun them and keep out of their way.

But the stoppage of the wangun, momentary though it was, had enabled the log to catch the boat.

This completed the calamity.

The rush of water raised the edge of the bateau and overturned it, just as the log struck the bow and smashed it.

Down the whirling and foaming rapids rushed the wrecked wangun, in close company with the big log, which continually threatened to pounce upon it and make an end of it.

To say that all this had happened in less time than is needed to write the description, or even to read it, would do no sort of justice to the rapid march of events.

All that has been described had occurred in a jiffy.

From the starting of the wangun down the rapids, until it was swamped and wrecked, a space of time had elapsed that was hardly appreciable to the anxious lookers on, however it may have seemed to the men in the boat.

What had become of them?

Lem Crawford, in his skiff at the foot of the rapids, was looking eagerly to catch a glimpse of them, though he was obliged to work hard to keep his craft from being swept from its position by the swift current.

As the bateau was tossed and twisted about by the torrent in its downward rush, one of the men became visible.

He had seized hold of the overturned wangun, had maintained his hold, and by the exertion of great strength, he climbed up on its bottom.

It was Hemlock Hank.

Cheers arose from both shores as he was seen there, bravely clinging to his only hope of safety.

Then the bateau caught for a second on another rock, and again was whirled over by the mad rush of the torrent.

Hemlock Hank was no more to be seen.

Lem Crawford quickly pulled to the very foot of the rapids, putting all his strength into every stroke, dropped his oars, and looked for a sign of his friend.

Dead or alive, he meant to have him if possible.

As he was leaning over the side of his skiff, and just as the swift current was about to sweep him away, he caught sight of a man's head under the water.

He reached for it the full length of his arm, and grabbed a coat collar, pulling the man to the surface.

The wrecked wangun bore down on him, and whirled away, after badly bruising his left arm; but he was then gripping that coat-collar with both hands, and he would not let go.

The next instant the pursuing log swept downward and struck the skiff; but the light craft flew aside, and he still gripped the coat-collar.

Before he could realize it the skiff was borne down against the jam below, where it narrowly escaped destruction; but Lem clutched that coat-collar with a grip that nothing but death could part.

Two of his mates on the shore, who were sure that he had caught somebody, had run out on the jam to meet him, and with their assistance the man was drawn out on the logs.

It was Hemlock Hank, somewhat bruised, and nearly drowned, but otherwise uninjured.

As for Big Pete, not even his body could be found.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BREAKING A JAM.

THE wreck of Sloman's wangun might have caused a delay in the operations of the river drivers, if their progress had not already been stopped by the double jam at the rapids.

As it was, they had plenty of time to repair the bateau, and to fish up what could be saved of its cargo, while the two crews were at work clearing the river of logs.

The body of Big Pete was found, the day after the disaster, a little way beyond the lower jam.

It was terribly mangled, and there was no doubt that his fate had been decided by the log that struck the wangun just as it was overturned.

He was buried on the shore under the trees, rulerly confined, and with nothing that could be called a ceremony; but the scene was rendered impressive by the heartfelt grief of his comrades, whose eulogies of the departed logger were loud and sincere.

The Hawksley party determined that they would not run their wangun down the rapids until the jams were out of the way.

The passage could then be more safely made, especially as the western side of the river would be clear.

Walter Hawksley and Lewis Driggs were among those who watched closely all the events connected with the swamping of the Sloman party.

But their attention was chiefly directed to Lem Crawford as he sat in his skiff below the rapids, and when he boldly pulled up to the foot of the torrent, just as the heavy bateau and the big log were rushing down.

They fully expected that the young man, instead of saving a life, would lose his own.

In this they were grievously disappointed.

Not only was his head still on his shoulders, but he had added another feather to his cap.

"That beats all!" exclaimed Walter Hawksley. "I can believe in that fellow's luck now. Anybody else would have been knocked into kingdom come by either the bateau or the log."

"That's so!" responded Driggs. "Nobody but a darned fool would have rowed up there and put himself right between the teeth of danger."

"You wouldn't have done it," suggested his uncle.

"Bet your life I wouldn't."

"Not to save the life of any man?"

"Guess I would look after my own, first."

"No doubt you would—and last, too. It is a fine quality, Lew, that of looking out for number one, and you possess it to perfection; but that young Crawford seems to have a quality that goes ahead of it in the minds of most people, and I must admit that I admire him, much as I hate him."

"A fool for luck—that's what I say," rejoined Driggs. "It is nothing but his luck that makes him win all the time."

"But we won't despair, my boy. The best run of luck is bound to run out in time, and the pitcher that goes often to the well is sure to be broken at last."

In the mean time, little progress was being made toward clearing the river of the double jam at the rapids, and the loggers were growing irritable and discouraged.

Nearly four days had been spent in continuous labor at the "pesky" place, but with no effect worth mentioning.

The best men of both crews had been pecking and prying at the lower jam, and had succeeded in detaching a number of logs from the down-river side; but the main body was firm and immovable, a solid bridge of tangled timber that bid fair to keep its place until the logs should rot away.

Old loggers shook their heads as they walked over and examined it, declaring that it was one of the worst puzzles they had ever tackled, if not the very worst.

Lem Crawford took a peculiar interest in the jam, not only because he was anxious to get to the mouth of the river with the rest, but because he was fond of puzzles.

He had listened to much talk of jams in the logging-camps and on the drive, and had learned that the worst of them always had their weak points.

No matter how intricate and solid they seemed to be, there was usually one log that might be pulled or pried or cut away, letting the whole mass loose.

The difficulty was to find the weak point.

It was not to be supposed that a comparatively green hand would succeed where old and experienced loggers had failed; but it was possible, and Lem believed in his luck.

So he passed much of his time on the lower jam, looking for the key to the apparently impenetrable puzzle.

At last he thought he had found it, and he went out on the jam with his ax and pike-pole, at the hour when the crew had gone to the ten-o'clock meal.

His intention was to cut away the log which he had fastened on as the key and to give his comrades a pleasant surprise.

Walter Hawksley had been of the opinion, though he was overruled by the others, that the proper mode of procedure would be to attack the upper jam first.

If it could be started, as he believed it could, the force of its rush might be expected to sweep away the lower jam.

To this it was objected that if the upper jam should be started, and should burst the other, the breakage of logs and consequent loss would be very heavy.

Mr. Hawksley, however, thought that the loss of logs would be less important than the loss of time, and stuck to his opinion.

After he had given the others what he deemed to be ample time for the development of their ideas, and their efforts had proved unavailing, he determined to put his own plan in practice.

He carefully examined the jam at the head of the rapids, and was convinced that he had found the key to the position.

It was not where it would naturally be looked for, at the lower edge of the jam, but within a short distance from the upper edge.

That is to say, the cause began there.

The smaller end of an unusually long log had caught on a visible rock in the middle of the river, and the larger end, swinging around, had been stopped by another rock at the edge of the rapids.

Before it could work loose, a second log had attached itself to its larger end, reaching directly across the current.

The space that was left clear by these logs was quickly filled up by others, and many more came down and backed up on the jam that was thus formed and tightened.

It was clear to Walter Hawksley that if the smaller end of the first-mentioned log should be cut away from the upper rock, it must drop its hold on the second rock, and thus the entire mass would be let loose.

He determined to do this work himself, and so to do it that it should be a surprise to those who had opposed his plan.

He chose for it the hour of the ten o'clock meal, when he had seen Lem Crawford going to work on the lower jam.

The opportunity of breaking the jam and making an end of his enemy was too tempting to be resisted.

He caused himself to be rowed out in a skiff by a good oarsman to the rock near which he intended to operate, and the skiff was securely made fast to the rock, on the free side of the channel.

From this point he could easily reach the log which he wished to cut, and, in the event of success, could step back or be drawn back into the skiff.

Directing his oarsman to "stand by," so as to be ready in case of accident, he picked up his sharp ax and went to work with a will.

He was rapidly making the chips fly, and letting daylight into the timber, when Hemlock Hank appeared at the head of the rapids on the Hawksley shore.

Hank had known of his young friend's intention to attack the lower jam, and had made light of his purpose.

"It's no use, my boy," he had said. "You needn't try to do what the rest of us couldn't do. Mr. Hawksley is right. We must start the upper jam, and that'll smash the lower one to flinders. It's the easiest and cheapest way to do the business."

But Lem persisted in making the attempt.

"Go on, then, and fool your time away. You can't do any harm, I guess."

Hank Ward came from his meal considerably in advance of the rest of the crew, and went up to the head of the rapids.

As he went he saw Crawford busy with an ax on the lower jam, but said nothing to him.

When he reached the head of the rapids he was surprised to see two men at work in the river there, both of whom he recognized.

He at once guessed the nature and object of the attempt that was being made, and realized that the breaking of that jam at that moment would mean destruction to his young friend, who was busy on the lower one.

It was natural that he should also guess that Walter Hawksley might be making the deed serve a double purpose.

As the mischief might be done before he could warn Crawford, he must try to stop it right then.

"What are you doing there?" he shouted from the shore.

"Cuttin' the key log here," promptly responded the oarsman, who was a little startled by the shout.

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed Hawksley. "It is nobody's business what we are doing."

And he plied his ax more vigorously than before.

"Hold on!" shouted Hank again. "There's a man at work on the logs below."

"Better stop, boss," said the oarsman. "He says there's a man at work below."

"Nonsense!" answered Hawksley. "There can't be anybody there now. Seth's men don't want us to get the credit of this."

And his ax rose and fell swiftly, making the chips fly more rapidly, and letting daylight into the heart of the log.

"Hold on, I say!" yelled Hank. "Wait till I can warn him! If you break that jam now, you will murder him!"

Two more strokes of the sharp ax, and the log cracked and broke.

A terrific crash and a thunderous roar followed, as the tangled mass of logs went rushing down the rapids.

Walter Hawksley half stepped and half fell backward, and was grabbed by his oarsman and drawn into the skiff.

The grinding and tumbling logs of the broken jam shot at the two men as they were borne resistlessly by, and leaped up above them and momentarily threatened to crush them; but they were protected by the log to which the skiff was fastened, and in a few moments they were quite safe.

As Walter Hawksley glanced down the rapids, he might well congratulate himself on the success of his attempt to kill two birds with one stone.

How could his enemy escape?

The last of the chapter of "accidents" that had overtaken young Crawford must surely be the end of all.

CHAPTER XXX

BEARDING THE LION.

The first intimation that Lem Crawford had of the fate in store for him was the crack and roar of the breaking of the jam above.

It was a noise that might have been heard at a long distance, and it smote his ears like a peal of thunder.

He had cut into the log which he supposed to be the key of the lower jam, until his ax had worked its way half through it; but it gave no sign of breaking.

He continued to chop it until it was evident that his labor was wasted.

The log was not the key of the jam.

If he had cut it entirely through, the effect upon the others would not have been perceptible.

He had accomplished nothing but the ruin of a fine stick of timber.

Of course he did not care for that.

Others had done the same, in the course of efforts that had been alike unsuccessful, and nobody had grumbled.

It was not the loss of the log that worried him, but his disappointment in the loss of the success that he had hoped to achieve.

But he had failed, and he realized the fact, and sadly he turned to go away.

Just then it was that he was startled by the thunderous roar above.

Involuntarily he cast a glance in that direction, though he did not need to look, as he knew only too well what had happened.

He saw the tangled and tumbled mass of logs, pressed by the weight of water that had accumulated above them, shooting down the rapids like an avalanche.

The next instant it struck the lower jam with a crush that made everything shiver.

Those who had predicted the sweeping away of that jam by the starting of the other had prophesied truly.

So, also had those who predicted a large amount of breakage and loss.

When the avalanche of logs from above struck the mass below, great sticks of timber snapped like pipe stems, and others shot bolt upright into the air, and all were tossed and whirled and tumbled about in the wildest confusion, forming a scene that was grandly terrible.

Over and under and through it all rushed and tore the swift water, as if triumphant over the barrier that had restrained it.

Both jams were broken, and after a little while the logs sailed peacefully down the river on their way to the sea.

It was clearly impossible that any man could live a moment in that melee.

But Lem Crawford had been as quick as lightning in thought and action.

The plan that he had laid for securing his safety in case he had succeeded in his own attempt served him admirably when this unlooked-for danger confronted him.

He made the most that could possibly be made of the brief interval allowed him.

He thought and acted at the same instant.

Dropping his ax, he took a quick run with long steps over the still solid logs, and lightly struck the pike of his pole into one ahead of him.

Then, shooting onward with the momentum that his run gave him, he flew up into the air with his two hands grasping the pole, describing a half-circle as he went over the logs, and alighting more than two rods from his leaping point.

Just then came the crush of logs that made everything shiver.

But he had made his course "catacornered," as the loggers would say aiming his flight toward the upper side of the jam, as well as toward the shore.

Thus he alighted near the edge of the mass, and a few steps brought him to the water, at a point a little to the eastward of the rush.

He had previously sounded the river along the upper side of the jam, and had a good idea of its depth at all points—a knowledge which his presence of mind enabled him to use when he needed it.

Just as the log beneath his foot started to follow the rest in their wild career, he dived deep into the cold water, heading toward the shore, and swimming as low and long as he could.

When he was obliged to rise, he came up between two logs, but they were on the extreme edge of the avalanche, and were comparatively peaceable.

He easily got out of their way, and swam to the shore, where strong arms seized him and drew him forth.

Then such a cheer was raised as sent dismay to the heart of Walter Hawksley.

Lem was carried quickly by his friends to the camp, where he was warmed and dried and liberally drenched with rum.

Though they congratulated him most heartily on his escape, none of them seemed to wonder at it.

It had become an accepted fact among them that nothing could kill him.

They say that a cat has nine lives, Lem," remarked Seth Sloman. "I wonder how many you've got."

While his comrades were congratulating him, there was one silent man among them.

That was his bosom friend, Hemlock Hank.

Hank had not a word to say; but the frown on his face showed that he was keeping up no small amount of thinking.

What he was thinking of was the connection of Walter Hawksley with Lem Crawford's narrow escape from death.

As soon as the upper jam broke he had started down-stream on the shore, running and leaping at the top of his speed, in hot haste to go to the assistance of his friend.

Yet he knew well that no possible assistance could serve Lem, and that he could not even hope to be a witness of the manner in which he met his doom.

Indeed, he did not come in sight of him until Lem had nearly reached the shore.

He said nothing to his friends about the queer work above, nor to any of the others at the time.

They would soon know who had started the upper jam, and afterward they would be able to draw their own conclusions.

In the mean while he had a strong opinion of his

own which he was bound to express—not then and there, but at another time and place.

He proceeded at once to choose the time and find the place.

He took Lem's skiff while its owner was warming his chilled limbs at the camp-fire, and rowed over to the other side of the river.

There he found the Hawksley crew preparing to break up and follow the drive.

For this purpose they had all gathered at the camp, except two men who had gone up the river to bring their wangun over the then comparatively easy run of the rapids.

Among them were Walter Hawksley and Lewis Driggs, the former overseeing the break-up and directing the course of the men.

Hemlock Hank made the skiff fast, and went straight to where Hawksley was standing.

On his face was the same dark and heavy frown that it had worn since he saw Lem Crawford carried from the river to the camp.

Every one who looked at him knew that "something was up"—that a storm was impending.

"I want to know, Walter Hawksley," he sternly demanded, "what you meant by starting that jam when you knew that there was a man at work on the logs below."

There was no appearance of deference, or even of respect, in his tone and manner—nothing of the air of an inferior addressing a superior.

Indeed, there were no distinctions of rank or class among the loggers—only distinctions of necessary authority.

Their democratic equality was perfect.

Walter Hawksley turned pale.

He could not doubt that a direct charge was about to be brought against him, in the plainest and most forcible manner, by a man who was universally liked and respected.

"I started the jam," he answered. "It was my business to start it, and I generally attend well to my business. I supposed that you men would be angry when I got ahead of you; but I could not help that."

"Why did you start it just when Mr. Crawford was at work below? That is what I want you to answer."

"I am not the keeper of Mr. Crawford, as you call him."

"Just what Cain said," interjected Hank.

The master lumberman turned red then.

His careless word had been "picked up" in an unexpected style.

"What had I to do with him? If the greeny was down there on the lower jam, chopping away and spoiling logs, he had no business there, and was doing what he had no right to do. How was I to know that he was there?"

"I told you that he was there, and you knew it before I told you."

Walter Hawksley turned pale again.

"I told you that a man was there, and asked you to wait until I could get him out of the way."

"I was busy then. The key log was nearly cut. And I didn't believe you. I supposed that you were trying to keep me from getting ahead of your gang."

Hank Ward's lip curled, and his frown grew deeper.

"Walter Hawksley," he impressively declared, "when you say that you didn't believe me, you tell a most sinful and shameful lie. You did believe me, and you knew that the lad was there, and you knew that when the jam started he wouldn't have one chance in a thousand to get away with his life. If it hadn't been that God's providence was right there, to take him up and hold him safe, he would have been killed as quick as a wink, and you would have been his murderer. I charge it right here, to your face, that there was murder in your heart when you cut that log."

Silence followed this clear and direct accusation.

The men of Hawksley's crew stood about in various attitudes and with various expressions; but not one of them offered to lift a finger in his defense, or to say a word in his favor.

Hemlock Hank's declarations of fact always carried weight and obtained credence, and they knew well that he would never make such a statement unless he was convinced of its truth.

Besides, the feeling of Walter Hawksley and his nephew toward Lem Crawford had come to be pretty well understood among them, and previous events had been freely canvassed and judged.

There was but one course left to Hawksley and he promptly took it.

He drew a pistol, and cocked it.

"I have stood all I mean to stand from you, you big ruffian," said he. "You have brought a charge against me here that is as absurd as it is false. Either you have gone crazy, or that young chap has hired you to work off a spite against me. I have had enough of your base lies and mean insinuations. Clear out, now, or I'll blow the top of your head off!"

To see

Hank Ward also turned away.

Without another word, he walked down to his skiff and rowed himself across the river.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UNDER THE DARKNESS.

WALTER HAWKESLEY made no effort to defend himself before his crew—no attempt to excuse or explain his conduct—at that time or subsequently.

He was not worried by any demands for an explanation on their part, as not a man of them said a word to him upon the subject, or even mentioned it in his presence.

That affair, as well as previous affairs, seemed to be pretty well understood all around.

Necessarily some rumors of what had taken place came to the ears of May, and eventually she learned the entire history of the trouble.

She said nothing about it to her supposed father or cousin, and the only effect upon her was to cause her to regard one of them with greater coldness, and the other with greater aversion.

Thereafter the logs went on down the stream more quietly and easily, only one serious jam occurring during the rest of the drive.

This, though it involved some difficulty and delay, was not attended with danger.

It took place at a point where the river ran very swiftly in a narrow channel between high walls of rock.

There the logs paused, and were tightly jammed together, just as had been expected of them; but the river-drivers, from a long experience with the place, knew just how to overcome the obstacles that were met there.

A stout rope was taken across the river, tightly stretched from summit to summit of the rocky walls, and securely fastened on each side.

A pulley was sent out on the rope, with a line from either bank to adjust its position, and through the pulley was reeved another line, with a sling at the end.

One of the lightest men in the party, with an ax strapped to him, stepped from the cliff into the sling, was hauled out to the middle of the river, and there lowered to the jam.

Then he fastened the sling under his arms, and proceeded to search for the key log of the difficulty.

Having found it he cut it loose, and was quickly jerked up as the mass of logs went whirling and tumbling under him down the stream.

Then he was safely pulled ashore, the apparatus was removed, and the loggers merrily followed the drive.

That was the last jam.

Thenceforward the logs sailed more smoothly down the broader and quieter river, and the crews had little to do but follow them, floating easily down the pleasant stream in the softer and sunnier weather.

The long and hard winter was at an end, with all its toils and perils.

The difficulties and dangers of the river-drives were at last over, and its arduous labors were nearly finished.

Trees were bursting into leaf everywhere along the river, and by day the woods were vocal with the glad songs of the birds.

At night the loggers, with nothing more to strain or worry them, were free to dream of the homes which they were soon to reach.

Already they began to feel the relaxation to which they had been looking forward as the fitting close of months of toil and hardship.

So they floated gayly down the placid river, bequiling the time with songs and jests, and in their temporary camps spinning yarns of the past and dwelling cheerfully on the prospects of the future.

Near the end of the drive, when they were within a short journey of the boom that was to end the voyage of the logs and their own labors, it was decided that they would pass the night at a beautiful island, covered with magnificent elm trees, which was well known to nearly all the men in both parties.

Men were sent down in advance to prepare the camps, while the others slowly followed the logs.

It happened that their progress was slower than they had expected it to be, and that the night was well advanced before they came near the island.

But that was nothing to them then.

An hour, or a few hours, less of rest did not count when their labors were so light and so near their termination.

The night was unusually dark, moonless, starless, cloudy and quite warm.

The shadows that the trees on the shore usually cast were not visible, as there was nothing to cause them to cast shadows.

Scarcely anything was visible but the lights on the distant island, which had been set up by those who had gone before.

These cast their glimmer for a long distance across the dark and quiet water, and by them the two crews easily glided to their destination.

Lem Crawford was floating lazily down the river, alone in his skiff, his friend Hank Ward having gone on to help prepare the camp for the night.

The wangun was not far ahead of him, but invisible in the darkness, its position defined by the merry voices of the crew that were now and then raised in snatches of song.

Naturally he was thinking of the wild and rough life he had been leading so long, of the strange existence that was so near its close, of its many varied scenes, and of the chances and changes it had brought him.

Naturally, too, he was thinking more than kindly of May Hawksley, who was necessarily connected with all those scenes, and was then so closely connected with himself.

He had ascertained that she was Maud Crawford, the child of his adopted father, and there could hardly be a doubt that he would be able to establish that fact in court, if it should be necessary to resort to the law for her recovery.

In the course of his quest he had encountered great perils, but had passed through all of them safely, and there was good reason to believe that no more of that sort awaited him.

He had found her, and would soon be able to carry her in triumph to New York, and to gladden

the heart of the parent from whom she had so long been separated.

More than all, and better than all, he loved her, and was beloved by her.

As he drifted down the quiet river, thinking pleasant thoughts, and dreaming pleasant dreams, he was aroused from his reveries by the dipping of an oar or a paddle near by.

Instantly he was wide awake, and his hand involuntarily sought his pistol.

Those who had so often attempted to take his life might have some final plot against him, and he meant to be prepared for them.

A light canoe shot out of the surrounding darkness, and a clear and sweet voice hailed him.

"Is that you, Mr. Crawford?"

Joyfully he answered the hail, and directly the two light boats were floating side by side, held together by warm hands that clasped each other.

"I am so glad that I have come across you," said she, "It was worse than hunting a needle in a haystack to look for you on this dark water; but I have found you."

"You are more than kind," answered Lem. "I would have looked for you if I had dared."

"It is better as it is. I have wanted to see you so much; but have not had the faintest chance of meeting you. I have wanted to tell you something that I can no longer keep to myself, and that I can tell to nobody but you. Can you guess what it is?"

"I hope you want to tell me that you love me."

"That is just it. You must be a Yankee; you are so good at guessing. I did not really know, when—when you spoke to me, you know—how much I cared for you; but I know it now, and I know that I care more for you than for all the world besides, and that I shall never think of anybody as I think of you."

"Then there is nobody so happy as I am."

"Except me, Lem. And there is another thing that I have been very anxious to say to you. I know all about the attempt that my father made to take your life, at that bad place up the river. Of course I could not help hearing of that."

"But it is all over now, and I am alive and safe. Don't let that worry you, dear."

"It has troubled me more than I can tell you. It has given me the most terrible feelings toward him, as well as toward cousin Lew. That it should be my father who made such a horrible, murderous attempt—that is what makes me miserable."

"Try to shake off that feeling, May. There is no good cause for it, I assure you. I will have a secret to tell you before long, and then I hope that you will not be worried in that way any more."

"A secret?" joyfully exclaimed May. "What is it, dear?"

"I am not ready to tell you just yet; but it is something that I believe will please you greatly."

"I am sure it will. But I must run away now. We are getting near the island, and of course dad will be wondering where I am."

Just an instant longer the two boats clung together, and then they separated in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RUM'S WILD WORK.

WALTER HAWKESLEY had more than wondered what had become of May.

He had been much exercised in his mind concerning her.

He was floating down the river in his big bateau with the crew, and expected her to be near him in her canoe, but he missed her.

Again and again he called her, but she sent back no reply.

It was impossible for him to seek her then and there, and he was getting seriously uneasy, when suddenly her light canoe shot out of the darkness, and her clear voice hailed him.

"Did you call me, dad?"

"Yes, indeed. Did you not hear me?"

"I thought I did, and I came here as soon as I could."

"Where have you been?"

"I got lost in the darkness, just a little bit—strayed away from the wangun, you know, and it was not easy to find it."

"You should be more careful. Keep near me hereafter."

Soon they reached the beautiful island, and found a pleasant camp and a hot supper ready for them.

They also found something else there.

An enterprising speculator in a small way, anticipating the arrival of logging parties from up the river, and knowing that the island would be a favorite camping-ground for them, had erected a shanty there, which he had stored with such articles of necessity and luxury as would be appreciated by men who had long been shut out from the benefits of civilization.

Among his stores was a goodly quantity of New England rum, fiery and potent, for which he expected a brisk demand.

The loggers arrived, and his shanty was soon thronged.

The chief demand was for his rum, which he was obliged to dispense carefully, and to a certain extent on the sly, as the bosses would naturally be indignant if their men should drink too deeply before the close of the drive.

But some of the Hawksley crew contrived to get possession of a jug of liquor, which they secreted, and of which they drank largely at their own sweet will.

The effects of the unwanted stimulant were soon apparent.

Though the debauch was confined to a few, it was an extensive one as far as they were concerned.

Sleep was not for them, and their rioting and howling murdered sleep all over the island.

They acted more like wild men than rational human beings, speedily turning their own camp into a pandemonium.

Walter Hawksley, knowing well that rum was the cause of their crazy conduct, perceived the necessity of cutting off their supplies, if it were possible to do so.

He went to the shanty man, and peremptorily ordered him to quit selling liquor to the men, under pain of having his establishment gutted and his stock thrown into the river.

The dealer promised to obey this order, and promptly closed his place.

Yet it was evident that the drunkards were still getting plenty of liquor, and that they were extending the debauch and the consequent demoralization by supplying others.

He then set himself at work to ascertain where the liquor came from.

This was not at all a difficult task, as the men were so drunk that he could easily watch them and follow them to the hiding-place of the jug.

He reached the spot just as two stalwart loggers had drawn forth the jug, and one of them, Jim Shady by name, was about to raise it to his mouth.

Hawksley snatched the jug from the astonished man before he could get a sup.

"Wot d'yer mean by that?" roared Shady. "Gimme my rum! It 'longs to me."

"Not now," replied the master lumberman. "If you need a drop in the morning you can get it; but you have had too much already."

As he walked away toward the camp he was followed by the two men, and Shady was the first to overtake him.

The logger was drunk enough to be no respecter of persons, and just ripe for a row.

At that moment the loss of the liquor, though there was but little of it left, was an unendurable provocation to him.

"Gimme that jug!" he shouted hoarsely. "Give it up, you skulkin' murderer! Drop it this minute, or I'll break yer head!"

Walter Hawksley did drop it, flinging it down with such force that it was smashed.

The sight of the broken jug and the spilled liquor inflamed Jim Shady to madness.

"See what you've done!" he yelled. "You sneakin', black-hearted villain, you've got ter pay for that, an' I'll take the pay out o' yer hide."

His comrade egged him on in a maudlin way.

"Go fur him, Jim! Pitch inter him! Bu'st him in ther snoot! Smash his cocoanut like he smashed ther jug!"

Shady advanced upon his boss with doubled fists and a threatening air.

"You had better go and sleep off your liquor," said Hawksley. "Keep away from me, you brute, or you'll get hurt."

"I will, will I? Guess we'll see who'll git hurt. I ain't afraid o' pistols. Think you ken kill me like you tried to kill that young chap up river?"

"Keep off, I tell you!" again ordered Mr. Hawksley.

"Give him Hail Columby, Jim!" said the other logger, as he passed a stick to his companion.

Shady sprung forward, and dealt a crushing blow at his boss.

Walter Hawksley, who had nothing but his hands to defend himself with, threw up an arm to ward off the blow; but the heavy stick descended upon his head, and he fell senseless to the ground.

"Smash him!" shouted the third man. "Welt him well, Jimmy! Pay him up fur the new and the old!"

Jim Shady, wild with rage and liquor, pushed forward to obey this instruction and wreak his vengeance on the prostrate man.

But there was something in his way just then.

The noise of the affray had attracted the attention of others, and several men came running up.

Jim Crawford was the first to reach the spot, just as Walter Hawksley fell.

Stepping over the body of the stricken man, he faced his furious assailant.

"Quit that, now!" he ordered. "You have done harm enough."

"Clear the track, youngster!" shouted Shady.

"Lemme git at him!"

He raised his stick as he stepped forward, and aimed a blow at his fresh antagonist.

But Lem jumped in under his guard before the blow could fall, and lashed out his left hand in his own peculiar style.

He struck the big man fairly on the jaw, and sent him to grass just as he had dropped Jotham Rollins on the occasion of the first exhibition of his pugilistic prowess.

As Shady fell, Lem grabbed the stick to protect himself against further attack.

He needed it just then.

The remaining victor, partially sobered by what had happened, but none the less enraged, rushed upon him with another stick, dealing wild and furious blows that were difficult to parry.

Shady, also, quickly picked himself up, and came to the assistance of his comrade.

Between the two Lem Crawford might have fared badly; but Jotham Rollins stepped forward and engaged one of his assailants.

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that they ought to be held as prisoners, and delivered to the authorities at the nearest town for trial.

But, as they were very humble and penitent in the morning, and as Walter Hawksley sent word that he did not desire to punish them, they were set free and restored to fellowship with their comrades.

Perhaps the injured man thought that some of his own deeds needed condonation quite as much as theirs.

Perhaps there was something else that moved him to mercy.

During the latter part of the night he had heard the entire story of what transpired after his fall, and those who told it to him gave Lem Crawford full credit for his courage and skill and magnanimity.

It is reasonable to conclude that he did not get the narrative from the lips of his nephew.

Indeed, May had taken charge of him, and Lew Driggs was scarcely allowed to see him.

Hawksley said little about the affair, and mentioned Crawford's name only once.

Then he asked May to go and bring the young man to him.

Consequently May was a little surprised and very much rejoiced when she sought him out, coming to him with a pleasant smile and an unusually cheerful air.

"How is Mr. Hawksley?" he asked.

"Getting on pretty well," she answered. "He wants to see you."

"Wants to see me?" exclaimed the young man in genuine surprise.

"Yes, he wants to see you. And I am very glad to get a chance to see you, too. Oh, Lem, I know all about what you did last night, and how bravely you acted, and how you saved his life, in spite of all he had done against you. It was just like you, and I admire and love you for it."

"Any of the others would have done the same, May, if they had happened to be in my place. What does Mr. Hawksley want to see me for?"

"If I should make a guess, I would say that he wants to thank you. I should think he would, as you saved his life, and he knows all about it."

"I would prefer not to be thanked."

"I don't know what he wants; but you must come."

"As you order it, I will gladly obey."

He found the wounded man in his tent, lying on a comfortable couch of boughs and blankets, and apparently quite easy, in spite of his bandaged head.

Walter Hawksley requested May to prop him up in a sitting posture.

"You may go now," he said, when she had performed this duty.

"Go? Must I go?"

"Yes; I want to speak to this young gentleman alone."

May went out somewhat reluctantly, and Walter Hawksley, apparently with an effort, broached the subject that he desired to open.

"I am told that you saved my life last night, Mr. Crawford."

"I am not sure that I did," coldly answered Lem.

"But I may have been of some use to you then."

"If you had not come to my rescue, I would have been killed, and you acted very bravely, as you always do."

"The others were coming up as fast as they could, Mr. Hawksley. I happened to get there first. That is all."

"I believe I understand the matter. You know, I suppose, that I tried more than one scheme to put you out of the way when we were up the river."

"You and your nephew, I believe, tried several such schemes. Fortunately for you, as well as for me, they failed."

"Just so, and perhaps it was for the best that they did fail. No doubt you know why those attempts were made."

"I suppose I do."

"You know who I am, and who the girl is who is called May Hawksley?"

"I do. Your nephew told me. I knew it before that; but now I am able to prove it."

"That is true. I suspected your purpose, and made certain of it by opening a letter that you sent by the mail-carrier."

"I knew that," remarked Lem.

"Indeed! Do you know everything?"

"Not everything, but some things that I ought to know."

"You have been very smart and very lucky. When I found you out, and especially when I knew what you had learned, was it not necessary that I should put you out of the way, if possible?"

"Unless you chose to do the right thing," suggested Lem.

"But I did not choose to do the right thing. I chose to try to do the other thing, and failed. Now, Mr. Crawford, you have got me down at last. I am beaten fairly and fully. Your last act, in saving my life, has conquered me completely. I am at your mercy now, and ready to do whatever you require. What terms do you propose?"

"Terms? I really don't know what you mean by terms, Mr. Hawksley."

"Of course I have laid myself liable to the law in more ways than one. You can send me to the State prison if you want to."

"I have no wish to do anything of the kind. You have been good to the girl you spoke of, and she has been fond of you. For her sake, if for no other reason, I would be unwilling to harm you."

"Thank you, Mr. Crawford. But her father can proceed against me for robbing him of his child."

"I assure you that he will be so happy when he recovers her, that he will bear no malice."

"Then you will be satisfied if you can take her to him?"

"Fully satisfied. That is what I came here for, and it is all I want."

Walter Hawksley's face brightened a little, and then it was clouded by an expression of pain.

"You are as kind and generous," said he, "as you are brave and fortunate. Of course I have no right to expect anything of the sort; but there is one favor I want to ask."

"Name it."

"I have been very fond of May. Whatever you may think, I have loved her as if she were my own child. She is still very dear to me, and always will be. When she's taken away from me, may she not come to see me now and then?"

"When I returned to Philadelphia, after a long

"Of course she may, if she wishes to," answered Lem. "When she is my wife, she will do as she pleases, and go where she wishes to go."

"When she is your wife? Has it come to that? Is that part of John Crawford's plan?"

"As yet he knows nothing about the feeling we have for each other."

"So you are to marry May. Well, you deserve her, and she will have a good husband. Will you please send her in to me?"

"I will; but I must ask you, Mr. Hawksley, not to make any disclosures to her. I prefer that you should leave that to me."

"Very well. I hope you will make it as easy for me with her as you can."

Walter Hawksley, if not cheered by this interview, was greatly relieved by it.

He improved so rapidly that he was soon placed on an easy couch in his bateau, and both crews continued their journey down the river.

That night, which was the last night of the voyage, was improved by Lem Crawford in a manner that was very pleasant to him.

Under the starlight he rowed his skiff toward the Hawksley waukon, and near it he found May in her light canoe.

He asked her to paddle a little way with him.

"I am afraid that dad would not wish me to," she objected.

"He will be quite willing. There is something that he wants me to tell you."

"What did he want when he sent for you to come to his tent?" asked May, as they floated down the river.

"There were some matters that had to be settled between us, and they are settled now."

"Did he thank you for saving his life?"

"He did better than that. You may marry me, dear, if you will."

"May I? And leave my father?"

"No; you will go to your father."

"Go to my father? What do you mean?"

"Walter Hawksley is not your father."

Lem went on and told her the whole story, touching as lightly as he could Walter Hawksley's criminal conduct.

She listened to it all without a word.

When the story was ended, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"What is the matter, dearest?" asked Lem, as he held her canoe close to his skiff.

"Oh, it is so dreadful!" she sobbed.

"What is so dreadful?"

"My father is your father, and you are my brother—and—and—"

Then he realized that while he told the story he had spoken of John Crawford as his father.

"But your father is not really my father," he said. "I am only an adopted son, and am in no way related to him or to you. Don't you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," and her face cleared up under the starlight.

"When his daughter becomes my wife," said Lem, "we will both be his children."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A REUNITED FAMILY.

THE river drive was at an end.

The logs were safely gathered in the big boom, and the men who had cut and cared for them had dispersed.

During Lem Crawford's brief stay in Bangor he was a frequent visitor at the house of Walter Hawksley, who treated him with great politeness and no small amount of deference.

He never met Lewis Driggs there.

That young man had no wish to encounter Crawford, and was encouraged to stay away by his uncle, who was quite willing that the recent rivals should remain apart.

When Lem presented himself to May in the city, he was transformed as to his personal appearance, having passed under the hands of a barber, and having arrayed himself again in the suit which he had worn from New York.

She scarcely knew him at first; but he speedily made her acquaintance, and she complimented him on the improvement in his exterior.

His first act on reaching the city, however, was to communicate with his adopted father at New York.

For this purpose the mail was too slow, and he used the telegraph freely, relating the manner in which the enemy had been finally overcome, the assurances which he had given to Walter Hawksley and the arrangement that had been made for the future of himself and the girl he had discovered and recovered.

He quickly received a long reply, congratulating him upon every item of his success, confirming the promises he had made, and begging him to come to New York with his prize as soon as possible.

One evening when he called at Walter Hawksley's house, he found May in the parlor with her (late) father and a stranger.

The stranger was a man of fine appearance, with grizzled hair and beard, and the general aspect of a seafaring man.

"Mr. Crawford," said Hawksley, as the young man entered the room, "I want to make you acquainted with Captain Crawford."

"I am known as Captain Sam Crawford," said the stranger, "owner and commander of the brig Belfast, which I have brought here to take a load of lumber."

"I am glad to meet you, sir," responded Lem, advancing and extending his hand.

"And I am glad to find you," said Captain Crawford, as he gave that hand a shake that nearly brought the tears to the other's eyes. "I am wondering, young man, who you are. I am the half-brother of John Crawford, who, as Mr. Hawksley informs me, is your father by adoption."

"I have heard him speak of you."

"Queer, as we have been lost to each other so long. After my father married again, I never got along with his son by his second wife. In fact, we fell out badly, and concluded to let each other alone. So he lived in New York, and I in Philadelphia, where I married, and had a son."

"My wife died, and I, being a seafaring man, had to leave my baby boy in the care of a friend of mine, who also had charge of my property."

"When I returned to Philadelphia, after a long

voyage, my friend had disappeared, and with him had vanished my boy and a big slice of my property.

"I traced him to New York and there lost the clew, which I have never been able to pick up."

"The boy's name was Lemuel—the name, I understand, that you bear."

"He was named after my grandfather."

"Mr. Crawford adopted me," said Lem, "because that was my name."

"It was that name, when I heard it from Mr. Hawksley, that made me anxious to see you, because, young man, I am strongly inclined to believe that you are my lost son."

There was a young woman present who also had her opinion on that subject.

"I am sure, Lem," said she, "that this gentleman must be your father, because he has eyes like yours, and because—because I like him."

This was an unanswerable argument, and perhaps it passed for more than it was worth.

Captain Crawford was so strong in his own opinion, and Lem was so easily inclined to favor it, that it was at once agreed that he should go on to New York with them and endeavor to verify it.

So May Hawksley, thereafter to be known as Maud Crawford, was taken from the man whom she had so long regarded as her father.

The parting was not as hard as it might have been if she had not been compelled to cherish such bitter thoughts against him up the Penobscot.

Yet she parted from him in the most filial manner, and with many loving words and promises of future remembrance.

She even insisted upon seeing Lew Driggs, her recent cousin, and treated him with a kindness which he did not seem to appreciate.

Thereafter it was understood among Walter Hawksley's many acquaintances in Bangor that she had gone to New York to marry a young man whom she met in the lumber region, and that it was quite a romantic affair.

It was somewhat strange, they thought, that her father did not accompany her; but it was an accepted fact that he was a queer customer, and his conduct did not cause much comment.

During the trip to New York she constantly addressed Captain Crawford as "Uncle Sam," and a very lively friendship was struck up between those two.

John Crawford was not only immensely pleased at the return of Lem, but overjoyed at the sight of his daughter, whom he had never expected to see again.

In his delight at recovering her, he not only freely forgave the great wrong that had been done him, but even spoke kindly of the Charles Carinford who had become Walter Hawksley.

Lem was obliged to relate in all its details, and portions of it again and again, the story of his perilous adventures and his finally successful search among the loggers of Maine, during the winter he spent in the woods, and on the river-drive of the spring.

Where his modesty caused him to touch lightly on certain points, or to slur over his exploits, Maud made ample amends by depicting his skill and courage in such glowing colors that the old gentleman was enraptured.

He declared that his adopted son was more a son to him than ever, and that, as he had worthily won Maud, so he should happily wear her.

John Crawford and his half-brother, Captain Sam Crawford, were thoroughly reconciled.

Together they made a search into the origin of the boy who had been adopted by John Crawford, and their search was crowned with success.

They discovered that he was the son of Sam Crawford, whom the captain's false friend had brought from Philadelphia to New York, and had left there to be cared for by public charity when he decamped with the money of the absent sailor.

This discovery brought the family into closer relations with each other; but Maud, after all, was the tie that bound them, and it was she who brightened all their lives.

Before he left Bangor, Lem Crawford made presents to several of his friends among the loggers, not forgetting Luke Schooley, whom he hunted up for the purpose of bestowing upon him a substantial testimonial of his regard.</p

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